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# Preface

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Organ donation is a sensitive issue and engaging the families of potential donors about consent/ authorisation needs expertise and empathy. Discussions are particularly challenging when families have not thought about the issue before. This multi-faith and multi-cultural guide is intended to help NHS Blood and Transplant's specialist nurses in their conversations with families.

Right now there is an urgent need to encourage more people from BAME communities to join the NHS Organ Donor Register and share their donation decision with their family and friends. 13% of the UK population come from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) community, with major groups comprising people of South Asian origin (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, make up 4.9% the population) and black people (African and Caribbean, make up 3% population). Furthermore, 2% of the population are from the mixed ethnic group. More than a quarter of the people waiting for an organ transplant in the UK are from BAME communities and often, to find a blood and tissue type match, they need a donor of the same ethnicity. Sadly with few donors from BAME communities they will usually wait longer for their transplant. It is therefore essential that we pay attention to the way in which our services are provided for BAME communities and support more people to donate.

Given the immense diversity of different cultures and religions, this guide can only offer general advice and cannot cover every situation. The aim is to ensure our specialist nurses are aware of the needs of different communities and can speak to families sensitively and appropriately. This quick reference guide summarises the key issues of each ethnic minority group that are relevant to organ donation and end-of-life care.

Religious and cultural beliefs can play a major role in an individual's decision to donate organs. This guide has been devised in consultation and with the engagement and collaboration of various stakeholders, we are most grateful for their help and support.

We trust that everyone using this guide will find it useful in some way.

## **Sally Johnson**

*Director of Organ Donation and Transplantation, NHS Blood and Transplant*

This resource guide is produced by Alia Rashid, Specialist Nurse Organ Donation. For all staff that care for people from ethnic minority backgrounds; 'It's the little things that make the big difference'.

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## How to use this guide

### Section 1. General

Introduction to the purpose of this resource guide. Includes cross-cultural communication challenges and language barriers.

### Section 2. BAME communities' customs and cultures

Introduces specific BAME communities from around the world.

### Section 3. Religion – Faith beliefs and views on Organ Donation of the UK Six Major Religions

Offers guidance on the six main UK Faiths.

### Section 4. Resources

Useful references and websites that have helped to prepare this guide and may be of further benefit and interest to staff.

### Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this guide is accurate. The organisations involved in the production of this guide cannot accept responsibility or liability for any omissions or errors.

# 1. General

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## a) Introduction

Knowledge of cultural customs enables healthcare professionals to offer improved care and helps to avoid misunderstanding. The beliefs and expectations of a potential donor family may influence their decision to donate. Therefore understanding the culture, language, religion and ethnic background of a potential donor and that of their relatives becomes essential for the specialist nurse when providing end-of-life care and requesting organ donation consent.

The goal of this resource guide is to provide specialist nurses with the necessary information pertaining to the religious and cultural beliefs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Having such knowledge will enable staff to engage in meaningful interaction and communicate in ways that are regarded as appropriate and effective across the different cultures.

## b) What is culture?

Culture is a difficult term to define, it can refer to shared customs, systems of ideas, values, meanings, shared religious traditions, heritage, or some combination of all these. Terms such as culture, race and ethnicity are often interchanged. Culture is influenced by history, geography, family, friends, education and personal beliefs but it is not defined by one alone. Culture is also dynamic and subject to change. As one culture interacts with another, varying cultural attributes are adopted.

## What is religion?

It is easy to recognise the main world religions. They share features such as moral, dietary and modesty codes, and certain practices are given a high status such as prayer or meditation. Many involve both individual and communal activities. Most involve some idea of the Divine (but not all), have texts with a varying degree of authority, and most have organised structures of some kind. Alongside such 'world religions' there are more localised expressions of belief, newer organised

faiths, small 'sect like' groups, religious cults, belief systems which do not fit into any orthodox definition of a religion, and individuals who bring together many different traditions to create their own 'ad hoc' 'religious beliefs'. There is also an incredible range of diversity of beliefs within most religious groups. Religious care is given in the context of the shared beliefs, values, liturgies and lifestyle of a faith community.

Good cultural and religious care is based on good communication with the individual, their family and sometimes with the wider community, by staff that can recognise possible issues, who are willing to ask the right questions and who communicate these well across the team. In all that follows, it should be remembered that: *"The individual is the expert when it comes to their culture, religion or spirituality"*.

## c) Cross-cultural communication challenges

### *Why cross-cultural communication can be challenging?*

Most of the time in our daily lives we have no difficulty in communicating with others. We understand each other and if not we ask for clarification. This assumption does not necessarily hold true when two people from different cultural backgrounds are communicating with each other. The receiver of the information may think that they understand but in fact have interpreted what you have said in a way that is different to what you intended. Alternatively, they may not have understood at all but are too embarrassed to admit this, especially if you have already repeated your explanation. This understanding may be even more limited if English is not the first language of the person being communicated with.

When conversing with bereaved relatives across cultures it is important to understand that the emotional state of an individual naturally causes greater anxiety and thus their need to be understood and related to is also intensified.

Generally people likely 'read' the behaviours of others from the point of view of their own cultural group. An example of this is the use of 'please' and 'thank you'. From a white British cultural perspective, it is important to routinely use these terms when communicating. People of South Asian origins do not have this particular cultural norm and may not use these terms, although this does not mean that they are being rude, ungrateful or ignorant.

Therefore it is important not only to acquire knowledge about the culture of other groups but also to have knowledge and awareness of your own culture as this will influence your views of others.

The UK's population has a fast-growing number of individuals that hold the cultural identity of being 'Mixed Race'. The cultural customs and norms that are adopted by Mixed Race people are likely to be influenced by their multiracial status but this may not necessarily be the case. Consequently we must be aware of generalisation. Each of us is also an individual as much as, or more than, we are a member of a group. Therefore the individual's needs are to be established; choices and values should be respected as we would wish our own perspectives to be respected.

## d) Communication across language barriers

### *Language:*

The suggestions provided below should be used with caution. A fluent English speaker would be insulted if addressed in a slow manner and simple sentences. Watch carefully to see what each person understands and does not understand and adapt what you say accordingly. Remember that people always understand a bit more of a foreign language than they speak.

- Always be aware of the language you use. Listen critically to yourself; judge whether you are saying something as clearly as you can.

- Speak clearly but do not raise your voice. Talking loudly to a non-English speaker as if they were deaf is a natural reaction but is very disconcerting for the listener.
- Speak slowly. Try not to speed up as you get more involved in your conversation.
- Choose words that you feel will be known to the person that you are communicating with. Listen to what words are used by them and then use them yourself. Use the simplest and the most common words. For example, state 'start' and 'finish', not 'commence' and 'terminate'. Try to avoid using complicated medical terminology. For example; replace "the ventilator will be switched off" with "the breathing machine will be turned off". It is easy to slip into complicated medical language without noticing.
- Be careful with idioms and expressions like 'start from scratch', 'on the off chance', 'spend a penny'. Their meanings may not be at all clear to others.

### *Thinking before you start speaking:*

- Decide what you want to say and break your topic down into logical steps. Simplify each step in your mind before you begin.
- Remember that simplifying is not the same as condensing. If you condense what you say, you make it denser and also more difficult to understand, and you may lose the natural repetition which helps people follow any conversations. A lengthy simplified explanation is usually easier to follow than a shortened explanation.
- Use active verbs and not passive. For example, 'The consultant will be doing the brain stem death tests' not 'Brain stem death tests will be done by the consultant'.

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### *Give clear instructions:*

- Give instructions in a clear logical order. People may not understand the words, 'first this' and 'then that'; they are likely to recall things in the order they have heard them. The words 'before', 'after' and 'until' are complicated and are often misunderstood.
- Say – "First the breathing machine will be turned off and then when the heart stops the doctor will confirm the death and then we will wait five minutes and then we take (name of the deceased) for the organ donation operation".
- Do not say – "Death will be confirmed once the heart stops after the breathing machine is turned off and then (name of the deceased) will be taken to have the organ donation operation".

### *The problem of 'yes':*

- Avoiding asking "do you understand?" or "is that alright?" You are almost bound to get a yes for an answer. Yes is often the first word someone learns in a foreign language but does not necessarily indicate that they understand. Yes can also mean:
  - Yes, I'm listening but I don't understand.
  - Yes, I want to be helpful but I don't understand.

### *Do not overestimate people's ability in English:*

- Beware of over estimating the amount of English a person understands. Many people who have picked up English through everyday contacts are good at social chat and topics they use a lot. Although they seem to speak English fluently, they may suddenly get completely lost in an unfamiliar subject or expression. Often such individuals will continue to say 'yes' allowing you to continue talking to the next stages, hoping that all will suddenly become clear.

Therefore keep checking people's understanding.

### *Behaviour:*

- Coping across a language barrier can also affect the way people behave. Have you ever been in a foreign country where you could not speak the language? If you cannot understand what is being said, particularly by someone in authority, and you cannot express yourself or answer questions, you may behave quite differently from the way you behave using your own language.
  - You may feel that everyone is talking about you.
  - You are likely to become extremely sensitive to people's unconscious non-verbal signals: body language, eye contact, tone of voice, impatient gestures.
  - You may smile a lot and make friendly gestures to show that although you cannot communicate you want to be helpful.
  - You may become very tired even during a short conversation.
  - You may avoid people that you cannot understand because you do not want to feel stupid and humiliated.

## 2. BAME communities' customs and cultures

### a) Arab community

#### Introduction

The term Arab is associated with a particular region of the world. There are 22 Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. (Note: Iran and Turkey are not Arab countries)

More than half a million Arabs live in the UK. The Arab ethnicity was added to the 2011 UK census for the first time. The census revealed that Arabs make up approximately 0.4% of the population in England and Wales, of which almost 46% (110,000) reside in London.

#### Language

Any person that adopts the Arabic language is typically called an Arab. Spoken Arabic varies from country to country but Classical Arabic has remained unchanged for centuries. Classical Arabic is the main language of prayer and is the written language of the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book.

#### Greetings

The greeting between Muslim Arab communities is saying; "Asalaamu-Alaikum" meaning "peace be upon you". The response to this would be "Walikum-Asalaam" meaning "Peace be upon you too".

Other common Arab greetings are: "Ahlan" meaning "hello". "Marhaba" meaning "welcome" or "greetings". "Salaam" meaning "peace" or referred to as "hi".

Arab men shake hands very gently and this is often followed by placing the right hand to their heart. This gesture signifies greeting with respect or sincerity.

**DO:** employ this gesture when greeting Arabs, even if a handshake is not initiated. It will help with nurturing a positive rapport.

Failure to shake hands when meeting someone or saying goodbye is considered rude. However physical contact between the sexes is discouraged and some Arab Muslims may politely refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex.

**DO:** remember that this should not be viewed negatively and that this operates equally from women to men and men to women.

If a male professional is introduced to an Arab woman, it is the woman's choice whether to shake hands or not; she must initiate the handshake. Women shake hands only using their fingertips. Palm shaking is considered unacceptable.

**DO NOT:** shake hands with an Arab woman unless she offers her hand first, or if you are a woman.

**DO:** remember only to use fingertip handshakes if a handshake is initiated by a woman. (for men only)

Physical contact such as holding hands between people of the same sex is a sign of affection without any sexual connotation. It's considered a sign of warmest affection and respect – a sign of solid friendship.

**DO NOT:** assume they are in a sexual relationship.

#### Family values

The family is an integral aspect of the Arab culture. Arab families are often large and strongly influence individuals' lives. One's family is a source of reputation and honour, as well as financial and psychological support. An Arab's first loyalty is to the family, which cannot be dishonoured. Loyalty to one's family takes precedence over personal needs. In fact, if a person loses his honour or dignity, he is ruined in the eyes of his family and community. This cultural value dictates why many people always behave well in public and try to leave the best possible impression on others. The society is patriarchal and hierarchical. The elders are generally the most respected members of the family.

**DO:** acknowledge that you are aware of the importance of family honour and respect amongst the Arab communities. Communicating this understanding will inform the family of your appreciation for their values.

Privacy is also an important value for the Arabs, many Arabs rarely speak about anything that is personal and family related.

**DO:** bear this in mind when exploring medical and social history. Attempt to gain information in a non-intrusive manner.

### Naming

In the Arabic culture, a person's ancestry and his or her family name are very important and often a first name is followed by a father's name, then the grandfather's name and then this is followed by family name.

**NOTE:** the use of the word 'bin' in an Arab name translates to 'son of' and the word 'bint' translates to 'daughter of'

Male example: Saleh bin Tariq bin Khalid Al-Fulan

Saleh son of Tariq, son of Khalid from the Al-Fulan family.

Saleh is the personal name by which the individual is called. Tariq is his father, Khalid his grandfather and the family name is Al-Fulan

Female example: Fatima bint Tariq bint Khalid Al-Fulan. Fatima is the forename.

### Communication styles

Constructive criticism can be taken as an insult.

**DO:** take an indirect approach towards any corrective remarks and include praises of any correct understanding.

Admitting, "I don't know" is distasteful to an Arab. Arabs place a great importance on appearances and politeness regardless of the accuracy of the statement. For example, to questions which require a yes or a no, such as "Do you understand?" the Arab's preoccupation with appearances and politeness automatically requires that he answer "yes" whether it is true or not.

In the Arab world, a flat "no" is a signal that you want to end the relationship and it is discourteous to say "no". The polite way for an Arab to say no is to say, "I'll see what I can do," no matter how impossible the task may be. After the Arab has been queried several times concerning his success, an answer of "I'm still checking" or something similar means "no". Such an indirect response also means "I am still your friend, I tried". Therefore, when dealing with Arabs remember that the "yes" you hear does not always mean yes and might mean no.

**DO:** bear this in mind and avoid asking direct questions but rather attempt to establish the Arab families understanding through repetition or other such indirect means.

**DO:** attempt to recognise a response for its true meaning.

### Religion

Not all Arabs are Muslims, nor are all Muslims Arabs. A minority adhere to other faiths, largely Christianity, but also Druze and Bahá'í. Although despite religion, many of the important values in the Arab culture come from the religion Islam. See Faith Chapter – Islam.

## b) African communities

### i. Ghanaian community

#### Introduction

The 2011 UK census revealed over 93,000 Ghanaians living in England and Wales. Within the Ghanaian community there are varying ethnic groups.

Ghanaian society is hierarchical. People are respected because of their age, experience, wealth and/or position. Older people are viewed as wise and are granted respect. In a group one can always see preferential treatment for the eldest member present. With respect comes responsibility and people expect the most senior person to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.

**DO:** establish a relationship with the senior member of a family where possible.

#### Language

Ghanaians have many spoken languages; Twi, Fante, Ga, Hausa, Dagbani, Ewe and Nzema being the major ones. English is the official language of Ghana and so many Ghanaians speak fluent English.

#### Greetings

Handshakes are the most common means of greeting and it is generally common to wait for a woman to extend her hand first. Eye contact during greetings is considered important amongst Ghanaians.

**DO:** initiate this courtesy of eye contact during greetings.

#### Family values

The family is a very strong bond in Ghana and is the primary source of identity, loyalty and responsibility. Family obligations take precedence over pretty much everything else in life. Individuals achieve recognition and social standing through their extended family. It is important for Ghanaians to maintain dignity, honour, and a good reputation. The entire family shares any loss of honour, which makes the culture a collective one. In order to protect this sense of face, there is a need to maintain a sense of harmony; people will act with decorum at all times to ensure they do not cause anyone embarrassment.

**DO:** acknowledge that you are aware of the importance of family obligations amongst the Ghanaian communities. Communicating this understanding will inform the family of your appreciation for their values.

#### Naming

Traditionally days of the week are important aspects of the Ghanaian naming culture. Along with ancestral and religious names a week 'day name' is also given. There is a given male and female name for each day of the week. Monday- Kojo (m), Adjoa (f); Tuesday- Kwabena (m), Abena (f); Wednesday- Kwaku (m), Akua (f); Thursday- Yaw (m), Yaa (f); Friday- Kofi (m), Afua (f); Saturday- Kwarne (m), Ama (f); Sunday- Kwesi (m), Akosua (f).

A day name is sometimes given as a forename and followed by a family name.

**NOTE:** it may be beneficial to consider relating to Ghanaian families by expressing an awareness of the patient's birthday.

## Communication styles

Ghanaians are often indirect communicators. This means they take care not to relay information in any way that could cause issues, whether that be giving someone bad news, turning down an invitation, refusing a request or any other such matter. Ghanaians always want to protect their own and others' face as well as maintain harmonious relationships.

As a result, they tend to use proverbs, wise sayings and analogies. This allows ideas or messages to be conveyed in a manner that does not seem so blatant. In fact, people who are viewed as wise frequently speak in proverbs.

Silence is a common means of communication. If someone is uncomfortable with a question or do not think the asker will appreciate the response, they will say nothing rather than make the other person uncomfortable.

**DO NOT:** continue to ask the same question, but rather communicate that you comprehend through their silence a sense of apprehension and/or disagreement, and endeavour to venture further into understanding the issue in a supportive manner.

Titles are important; use the honorific title plus any academic or professional title and the surname.

**DO:** wait until invited before moving to a first-name basis.

Ghanaians exchange business cards without formal ritual. They present and receive business cards with two hands or the right hand, never with the left.

**DO:** follow this tradition and hand contact details to families respecting this manner.

## Religion

The majority of Ghanaians in the UK follow Christianity although there is also a growing number following Islam. See Faith Chapter.

## ii. Nigerian community

### Introduction

The term Nigerian refers to citizenship or people with ancestry from Nigeria. Nigerians come from multiple ethnic and religious backgrounds as the formation of Nigeria was the result of a colonial creation by the British Empire that did not correlate with ethnic and religious boundaries.

Nigeria is one of the largest countries in Africa with an estimated population of 120 million. The UK 2011 census revealed that approximately 174,000 Nigerian descendants reside in the UK. Many Nigerians and their British born descendants live in South London, with concentrated communities also in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Cardiff and Sheffield.

### Language

Nigeria is estimated to have over 500 spoken languages, although the official language of Nigeria is English. The major native languages spoken are Yorubu, Ibo and Hausa.

### Greetings

Greetings are highly valued among the Nigerian communities. Neglecting to greet another or rushing through a greeting is a sign of disrespect.

**DO:** take the time to be courteous and respectful when exchanging greetings.

Personal space between members of the same sex is limited and Nigerians may stand or sit very close when conversing.

**DO NOT:** perceive this close proximity as intimidating but rather note it as a cultural norm.

## Family values

Extended families are the backbone of the Nigerian social system. Grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers and in-laws all work as a unit through life. Social standing and recognition is achieved through extended families. Similarly a family's honour is influenced by the actions of its members.

**DO:** acknowledge that you are aware of the importance of the extended family honour and respect amongst the Nigerian communities. Communicating this understanding will inform the family of your appreciation for their values.

Nigeria is a hierarchical society. Age and position earns, even demands, respect. Age is believed to confer wisdom so older people are granted respect. The oldest person in a group is honoured and often greeted and served first as a sign of respect. In return the most senior person has the responsibility to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.

**DO:** ensure this hierarchical value is acknowledged by following these attributes towards elders (i.e. greet the elders first, and when refreshments are offered request and serve the elders first).

**DO:** establish if the decision-making responsibility falls to the eldest in the room and if so ensure their inclusion in all conversations.

**NOTE:** although the role of the extended family is receding, there remains a strong tradition of mutual caring and responsibility among the members.

## Naming

Nigerians have many unique naming practices. Often first names are chosen for the meaning and sometimes reflect the circumstances under which the child was born. A personal name is followed by a family name and some family names come from local communities.

Women typically take on their husband's family name upon marriage and traditionally children take on their father's family name.

## Communication styles

Communication styles vary amongst Nigerians as a result of the variation in the ethnic make-up of the country. Some Nigerians can be very direct and loud communicators whilst others may have a more indirect manner, relying on non-verbal cues.

**DO:** observe the situation carefully before determining what behaviour is appropriate.

Because Nigeria is a multicultural nation, gestures also differ from one ethnic group to another. However, pushing the palm of the hand forward with the fingers spread is regarded as vulgar.

**DO NOT:** use this gesture when communicating with members of the Nigerian community.

Generally Nigerians prefer facial expressions that imply empathy and believe an indifferent facial expression indicates that a person is ignorant or obnoxious.

**DO:** utilise empathic facial expressions when communicating with bereaving families.

The perception of time in the Nigerian communities differs from that in the West as everything tends to move at a more relaxed pace. An individual's needs are considered more important than being led by a timeframe.

**DO:** keep this in mind and be flexible when communicating with Nigerians.

**DO:** acknowledge this time perception when communicating donation timeframes, in particular DCD donation timeframes. Explain to families the necessity to follow protocols and explore means of ensuring the families' needs are met within the donation timeframes.

## Religion

The majority of Nigerians in the UK follow either Christianity or Islam. See Faith Chapters.

### iii. Somali community

#### Introduction

The United Kingdom is home to the largest Somali community in Europe. According to the UK 2011 census there are approximately 99,484 Somali-born residents in the UK, of which 65,333 reside in London. There are also concentrated communities in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Leicester, Sheffield and Cardiff.

#### Language

The Somali language is the mother tongue of Somali people and the official language of Somalia. The 2011 UK Census estimates that 86,000 (0.2%) individuals living in England and Wales speak Somali as their main language. Some Somalis in the UK also speak Arabic.

#### Greetings

Somalis warmly greet each other with handshakes, however shaking hands with the opposite sex is often avoided.

**DO NOT:** shake hands with the opposite sex unless the offer of a handshake is made first.

Common verbal greeting include:

The Islamic greeting: "Asalaamu-Alaikum" meaning "peace be upon you". The response to this would be "Walikum-Asalaam" meaning "Peace be upon you too".

Other common Somali greetings are:  
 "Subha Wanaagsan" meaning "good morning".  
 "Galab Wanaagsan" meaning "good afternoon".  
 "Habeen Wanaagsan" meaning "goodnight".

#### Family values

Somalis commonly have large families and traditionally live in multi-generational households. The family is a source of personal security and identity. The father or the eldest male member is known to be the head of the household and the decision maker. It is considered culturally unacceptable for a man to not be perceived as being in charge of his home.

**DO:** remember the significance of this when a Somali female is identified as the highest ranking "Next of Kin" according to the Human Tissue Act. Ensure that the male decision maker is consulted and included in discussions.

Children and elders share mutual respect. When addressing another family member or friend, words for 'aunt', or 'uncle', 'brother', 'sister' and 'cousin' are used depending on the person's age relative to the speaker.

#### Naming

Somali names typically consist of three, and occasionally two, names. Traditionally, an individual's middle name is the father's first name, and the last name is the paternal grandfather's first name.

Women do not usually change their last name upon marrying, so married parents often have different last names.

#### Communication styles

Somalis may communicate indirectly, through examples or stories, or alternatively communicate very directly without diplomatic language. It is common to speak in a loud voice and use hand gestures.

**DO:** observe the situation carefully before determining what behaviour is appropriate.

It is common for Somalis to use sweeping hands and arms to dramatise speech.

It is impolite to use the index finger to call somebody, as the gesture is used for calling dogs.

**DO NOT:** use this gesture when calling a member of the Somali community.

#### Religion

The vast majority of Somalis are Muslims and they constitute one of the largest Muslim groups in the UK. See Faith Chapter – Islam.

## c) Caribbean community

### Introduction

The Caribbean covers a wide range of different islands, including Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, Barbados, Trinidad and Guyana. There is a considerable cultural and even language difference between islands. There are about half a million people of Caribbean origin in the UK.

British Caribbean people are of West Indian background. Their ancestors were primarily from Africa.

**NOTE:** in the UK, Afro-Caribbean is a broad term that is sometimes used to define all British black residents. It is also a term that is used for people of solely African origin. It is not a term used by NHSBT.

The traditional use of the term African-Caribbean community is in reference to groups of residents continuing aspects of 'Caribbean' culture in the UK. NHSBT use the term Caribbean community.

**NOTE:** this information in this section relates to the Caribbean community in the traditional sense.

### Language

English is the dominant language spoken in the Caribbean. Although there are clear and distinctive dialects known as 'Creole' or 'Patois', which include older words and speech patterns, many of which form part of an oral heritage. Some islands primarily use a French Creole/Patois.

### Greetings

Caribbean people warmly greet each other with handshakes, whether male or female, and make direct eye contact without staring.

**DO NOT:** avoid eye contact when greeting. This is viewed as being suspicious and so will hinder attempts in building rapport with the family.

The common verbal greeting will include salutation for the time of day; "Good morning" or "Good evening".

### Family values

Generally, Caribbean communities have close extended family members including aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. The family provides emotional and economic support, and many Caribbeans spend a lot of time with family. Most Caribbeans would seek to have trust and faith in family members over those in authority.

### Naming

Names generally follow 'British' models, a remaining legacy of historical slavery, although biblical names are more common, and there is a tendency towards original first names.

### Communication style

Communication styles vary amongst Caribbeans as a result of the vast variation of cultural practices and norms. Some Caribbean communities can be very direct and loud communicators whilst others may have a more indirect manner, relying on non-verbal cues.

**DO:** observe the situation carefully before determining what behaviour is appropriate.

### Religion

The Christian faith has played a strong role in the life of many Afro-Caribbean individuals, especially the older generation. There is a tradition of strong black churches in the UK, with distinctive patterns of worship. Some are newer traditions; others are related to earlier missionary traditions. There are also notable Muslim and Hindu communities.

## d) Chinese community

### Introduction

China is part of East Asia and has the world's largest population of over 1 billion people. The UK has seen an increase in the Chinese population. According to the 2011 Census, there are 393,141 Chinese people in England and Wales, making them the fourth largest ethnic group in the UK.

### Language

The official language of China is 'Mandarin', but in Britain, most Chinese can speak and understand 'Cantonese'. 'Hakka' is also a substantial minority language, and there are a very large number of dialects depending on the region of origin.

### Greetings

Chinese greetings are quite formal. A handshake is common and sometimes this is followed by a gentle bow. The eldest person in the room is always greeted first.

The most common verbal greeting amongst the Chinese community would be to say "nin hao" which literally means "hello/hi". It is pronounced as "ne-in haOW".

### Family values

Family structure is highly valued and holds a prominent position amongst the Chinese culture. Family bonds are held as sacred and honoured accordingly. Elders are respected because of their wisdom and knowledge. The society is also patriarchal; men are traditionally considered the head of their households and are responsible for family decisions.

### Naming

Naming systems can be a mix of European and traditional models. Traditionally, the family name is first, followed by a two character personal name, e.g. Suen Lan-Ying. Sometimes this is reversed, and a European name is added, such as Jane Lan-Ying Suen.

**NOTE:** often Chinese people have a preferred name that they wish to be called.

Formality in naming is also important, especially for older generations, who may prefer you to use their full name or family name and title.

### Communication styles

Chinese verbal communication style is direct and polite. However Chinese non-verbal communication speaks volumes. Often Chinese people rely on facial expression, posture and tone of voice to tell them what someone is feeling. A frown can be interpreted as a sign of disagreement.

**NOTE:** most Chinese maintain an impassive expression when speaking.

It is considered disrespectful to stare into another person's eyes. Avoiding eye contact is regarded to give the individual their own privacy.

**DO:** remember that eye contact being avoided is not a sign of disengagement amongst Chinese people but rather a shield of their own personal privacy.

### Religion

The Chinese Government officially encourages atheism, but an incredibly complex range of beliefs may be held. These include Chinese versions of Buddhism, respect for ancestors, Confucianism (a philosophy which emphasises respect for hierarchies, parents and elders), Taoism (a vast range of philosophical writings and folk practices, emphasising the Way of Nature with its two primal forces, 'yin' and 'yang' in opposition and struggle. This can involve thousands of different named deities) and Shamanism (holding the belief that people can enter a trance and communicate between the material world and a spiritual world). There are also a number of Christian Churches.

## e) Jewish community

### Introduction

British Jews are British people of Jewish descent who maintain a connection to the Jewish community, either through actively practicing Judaism or through cultural and historical affiliation.

The UK is home to the second largest Jewish population in Europe. According to the 2011 Census, 263,346 people answered "Jewish" to the voluntary question on religion. However, it is important to note that the subject of who is a Jew is complex, and this religion question did not record people who may be Jewish through other means, such as ethnically and culturally. According to the Jewish Virtual Library, the Jewish population in the UK stands at approximately 291,000 people.

### Language

The two major languages associated with Jews are Hebrew and Yiddish. Hebrew is the main language of prayer and is the written language of the Tor'ah, the Jewish holy book.

The word 'Yiddish' is the Yiddish word for 'Jewish', so it is technically correct to refer to the Yiddish language as the 'Jewish' language.

**NOTE:** 'Hebrew' is never referred to as 'Jewish'.

### Greetings

The most common greeting amongst the Jewish community would be to say "Shalom" which literally means "Peace". It is a way of saying "Hello" or "Goodbye".

Another traditional greeting is to say "Shalom Aleikum" meaning "Peace upon you". A response to such a greeting would be: Aleikum Shalom meaning "and upon you, Peace".

**NOTE:** These greetings are similar to the common Arabic greeting; "Salaam" or "Asalaam-Alaikum"

**DO:** be mindful of these subtle differences and ensure correct pronunciation to avoid misunderstanding of one's respective greetings.

### Family values

The Jewish tradition gives great stress to the reverence of the parents. Jewish families try to have close respectful family relationships, with care to both elderly and young. Women are regarded as separate and equals. However, the overall familial structure is traditionally patriarchal; the male has a duty to work and financially take care of the family while the duty of the women is to take care of the home and children. Jews identify themselves as a 'nationhood' or 'peoplehood' and feel a sense of connectedness to one another beyond family ties.

**DO:** acknowledge that you are aware of the importance of respectfulness amongst the extended Jewish community. Communicating this understanding will inform the family of your appreciation for their values.

### Naming

It is customary to name a Jewish child after a recently deceased relative. This is a way of honouring the dead and of keeping the dead person's memory alive. In the Jewish culture often a first name is followed by a father's name.

**NOTE:** the use of the word 'ben' in a Jewish name translates to 'son of' and the word 'bat' translates to 'daughter of'.

Male example: David ben Joseph  
David son of Joseph

David is the personal name by which the individual is called. Joseph is his father.

Female example: Miriam bat Aaron.  
Miriam being the forename.

Cohen; Levy and Israel are surnames that are specifically Jewish in nature.

### Communication styles

Jewish people have a very frank and direct style of communication. Often they are very expressive in their communication. Some Jews may use hand gestures when speaking.

**NOTE:** these gestures often don't have any significant meaning.

Respect and hospitality are very important to the Jewish community.

**NOTE:** it may be beneficial to take some extra time to show extended courtesy and support to the family, before talking to them about organ donation.

Jewish people typically take an active role in healthcare. They will often ask questions, with the expectations of receiving a detailed, in-depth answer.

### Religion

The vast majority of people from the Jewish community in the UK follow Judaism. See Faith Chapter – Judaism

## f) South Asian communities

### i. Bangladeshi community

#### Introduction

'Bangladesh' is a combination of the Bengali words, 'Bangla' and 'desh', meaning the country or land where the Bangla language is spoken. The country was formally known as East Pakistan and was only formed as an independent nation in 1971. Bangladeshis are also known as Bengalis.

The UK 2011 Census reports 451,532 Bangladeshi residents in the UK. Over 50% of this Bangladeshi population live in London. Birmingham, Oldham and Luton also have significant Bangladeshi communities.

#### Language

The official language of the Bangladeshi community is Bangla, also known as Bengali. Sylheti is another common language spoken amongst the Bangladeshi community. Although Sylheti is a separate language; it is sometimes referred to as a dialect of the Bengali language.

**DO:** establish the families preferred language if an interpreter is being called for. Although note, the Sylheti language is limited in words that can be translated into English. If possible an interpreter that speaks both Bengali and Sylheti may be a preferred choice.

#### Greetings

The greeting between Muslim Bengali communities is saying; "Asalaamu-Alaikum" meaning "peace be upon you". The response to this would be "Walikum-Asalaam" meaning "Peace be upon you too".

"Khuda hafiz" means "God bless you" and is a farewell phrase used by Bengalis. Hand shakes tend to be very gentle and this is often followed by placing the right hand to their heart. This gesture signifies greeting with respect or sincerity.

A light and limp handshake is common amongst men but tends not to be as common amongst women.

Physical contact between the sexes is discouraged and some Bengali Muslims may politely refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex.

**DO:** remember that this should not be viewed negatively and that this operates equally from women to men and men to women.

**NOTE:** greetings with members of the Bengali Hindu population generally begin with the palms pressed together at around the chest level and saying "Namaste" meaning "I bow to the divine in you". This is a common Hindu greeting for when Hindus meet or say goodbye.

#### Family values

As a society, Bangladeshis have high moral values. They often revere religion, family and community elders. Family values will be dominated by religious beliefs and traditions of respected elders. Bengali families are highly hierarchical and patriarchal. Extended families tend to live in close proximity. Age and position dictate levels of respect. Older people are naturally viewed as wise and therefore granted respect and honour. Often the most senior male by age or position is the decision maker for the family.

#### Naming

Begum and Bibi are common surnames for Bangladeshi women. These are not family names but rather names that follow personal names for ladies.

Choudhry and Mia are common surnames for Bangladeshi men.

## Communication styles

Communication style amongst Bangladeshis depends on the degree of acquaintance. A direct approach is used for close acquaintance such as friends and relatives, whereas an indirect approach is customary for communication with professionals or distant acquaintances. Bangladeshis generally avoid confrontation and discourteous behaviour. In order to be polite; when communicating they may tell you what you may wish to hear.

**DO:** bare this in mind and wait to see what non-verbal actions follow the communication.

Time tends to be very casually viewed and it is customary to be late. Although when you meet, Bengali people do give their time freely, except when they are trying to avoid you.

**DO:** keep this in mind and endeavour to be flexible when arranging meetings.

Rather than say no or disappoint people Bangladeshis will phrase sentiments in such a way that it is up to people to read between the lines to understand what is being implied. Phrases such as "we will try", "that may be difficult", or "we will have to give that some thought" may really mean "this can't be done".

**DO:** bare this in mind and try to ask questions in several ways so you can be certain what was meant by a vague response.

## Religion

The majority of the British Bangladeshi community are Muslims (followers of the Islamic faith) with a small number of Hindus and Christian. See faith Chapter – Islam and Hinduism.

## ii. Pakistani community

### Introduction

Pakistan means 'Land of the Pure' in Urdu and Persian. The Majority of British Pakistanis are from the Pakistan Punjab and Kashmir regions.

The UK 2011 Census reports that there are 1,125,000 Pakistani residents in England and Wales. Of the South Asian communities, the Pakistani community is the most evenly spread across the UK.

### Language

The Pakistani community generally speak Urdu Punjabi or Mirpuri Punjabi although varying dialects within the languages are spoken. Urdu is the National language of Pakistan and is very similar to Hindi. Hindi is the most common language used by the 'Bollywood' movie industry, so Hindi and Urdu are often understood by almost all of the South Asian communities (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Gujarati and Punjabi).

### Greetings

The greeting within Pakistani Muslim communities is saying; "Asalaamu-Alaikum" meaning "peace be upon you". The response to this would be "Walikum-Asalaam" meaning "Peace be upon you too".

A lingering handshake and sometimes a hug is common amongst men. A handshake and a hug are common amongst women and some women exchange kisses on the cheek.

Physical contact between the sexes is discouraged and some Pakistani Muslims may politely refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex.

**DO NOT:** shake hands with a Pakistani woman unless she offers her hand first, or if you are a woman.

When greeting a member of the opposite sex, often a nod of the acknowledgement will suffice.

## Family values

The extended family is the basis of the social structure and individual identity. The extended family includes the nuclear family, immediate relatives, distant relatives, tribe members, friends and neighbours. By Western standards, families are quite large, often having up to 6 children. Pakistani families are also fairly private and endeavour to keep family affairs within the family.

Some Pakistani Muslim men can have up to four wives in accordance with the Islamic faith.

Older people are respected because of their age and position. They are regarded to be wise and their views are respected. They can also be protected at times by younger family members so as to not cause them distress or upset over difficult situations.

**DO:** attempt to establish the hierarchical relationship; is it one of seeking guidance from elders or protecting them?

## Naming

There is no formal naming structure followed by the Pakistani community, although some married women take on their husband's first name as their surname. However, many British Pakistanis now follow the Western naming conventions, with first, middle and last name, the last name being the family name.

Common Pakistani surnames are Khan, Hussain, and Malik.

## Communication styles

Pakistanis tend to favour a mix of direct and indirect communication. Often an indirect approach is used when speaking to elders and a direct approach towards youngers or peers. Pakistanis also tend to interrupt and talk over people during conversations.

**DO NOT:** regard this as being rude; interrupting is commonly accepted amongst Pakistanis.

A common phrase used amongst Pakistanis is the Arabic phrase 'In-Sha-Allah' meaning 'God willing'. A definitive response is followed by this phrase to indicate something will or will not happen depending on the will of God.

Pakistanis view time as very free-flowing. Some young Pakistanis refer to Pakistani time as PST – Pakistani Stretchable Time – where 20 minutes denotes an hour and people arrive late for almost everything.

**DO:** keep this in mind and endeavour to be flexible when arranging meetings.

## Religion

Over 90% of Pakistanis living in England and Wales reported their religion to be Islam in the 2011 Census. The UK is also home to one of the largest overseas Christian Pakistani communities; 17,000 Pakistanis reported their religion as Christianity. See faith chapter – Islam and Christianity.

## iii. Gujarati community

### Introduction

There are approximately 1.2 million people in the UK that come from India. Of this 1.2 million, around 600,000 are Gujaratis. The Gujarati community originates from Gujarat; a state in the Western part of India that is traditionally Gujarati-speaking.

**NOTE:** the information in this section relates to the Gujarati Hindu community. Please see Pakistani communities for Pakistani Gujarati.

British Gujaratis are a sub-group of the British Indian population. The majority of British Gujaratis follow the Hindu religion but there are also a small number of Gujarati Muslims and Sikhs.

## Language

The official language spoken by the Gujarati community is also known as 'Gujarati'; it is an ancient language 'Sanskrit' the mother-language of all Indo-European languages and has several dialects. Gujarati people also speak Hindi.

Hindi is the most common language used by the 'Bollywood' movie industry, so it is often understood by almost all of the South Asian communities. (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Gujarati and Punjabi). Urdu is similar to Hindi and most of the South Eastern Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Gujarati and Punjabi communities understand it.

## Greetings

Greetings with members of the Gujarati Hindu population generally begin with the palms pressed together at around chest level and saying "Namaste" meaning "I bow to the divine in you". This is a common Hindu greeting for when Hindus meet or say goodbye. This is sometimes followed with a two-handed gentle handshake, where the hand of one person is gently clasped between the hands of the other.

**NOTE:** it is customary to greet the elder members of the group first.

## Family values

Gujarati family values and traditions are strongly influenced by the faith followed. The family is considered the heart and central focus of a person's daily life. Traditional Gujarati families tend to be extended, with at least three generations living in close proximity. Gujaratis hold very complex values in a balance of decision making within the family where male elders will make key decisions for the family in financial terms and businesses while female members would make key decisions on all family, community and social matters. The opinions of young family members also matter. Compared to other ethnic communities a high percentage of Gujarati women work in professional fields and participate equally in family affairs.

**DO:** establish the family network, as Gujaratis, like most South Asian communities, are highly family orientated.

## Naming

Gujaratis commonly have three names; a given name, a middle name and a last name. The middle name is the father's name and the last name is the family name.

Traditionally, when a woman marries, she takes her husband's first name as her middle name and her husband's last name as now her family name too.

Bhatt, Joshi, Modi, Patel, Mehta, Shah and Mistry are common Gujarati family names in the UK.

## Communication styles

Gujaratis tend to favour a direct style of communication over an indirect approach. Emotions and body language are often quite expressive and Gujarati people tend to interact on much more of a personal level.

The Gujarati community tends not to hold conversations through doorways; this is considered inappropriate as they would not like their private matters being openly discussed.

**DO:** avoid conversations through doorways of hospital side rooms or relative rooms out of respect.

Gujarati Hindus view time as eternal and tend to have a relaxed attitude towards time when visiting relatives (as they would like to spend more time with sick relatives in hospital to comfort them).

## Religion

The majority of the British Gujarati community follow Hinduism with some following Islam and Sikhism. See faith chapter.

Gujarati Hindus:

- Near the end of life, believe that if there is any religious scripture like Bhagavad Gita, Shrimad Bhagavatam, Ramayana or Bhishm-stuti, to be read to the patient it will help their soul to leave the body peacefully.
- When any elderly patient is admitted to the hospital, would like to stay with that relative during the extra hours (most of the day) to comfort and attend to family members' wishes.
- Eat home cooked pure vegetarian food, which they believe to be appropriate for the sick person.

#### iv. Punjabi community

##### Introduction

The term Punjabi or Panjabi refers to people with ancestry from Punjab; a geographical region in South Asia comprising vast territories of Eastern Pakistan and Northern India.

The vast majority of Pakistani Punjabis are Muslim and Sikhism is the main religion practiced by Indian Punjabis, with some also following Hinduism.

**NOTE:** the information in this section relates to the *Punjabi Sikh community*. Please see Pakistani communities for Pakistani Punjabi.

British Punjabis are a sub-group of the British Indian population.

##### Language

The predominant language spoken by the Punjabi community is also known as 'Punjabi'.

##### Greetings

"Sat Siri Akal" meaning "God is ultimate truth" is used by Sikhs throughout the world when greeting other Sikhs. This greeting is used by both males and females and is used between the sexes too. It is a greeting used for hello and goodbye.

##### Family values

The Sikh faith encourages family members to take an active role in caring for the immediate and extended family. Therefore, Punjabi people will seek to consult all family members before making any decision.

##### Naming

Most Sikhs have three names – a first name, a religious name and a family name. All Sikh males have the religious name 'Singh' meaning 'Lion' and all Sikh females have the religious name 'Kaur' meaning 'Princess'

##### Communication styles

Punjabi people tend to favour a direct style of communication over an indirect approach. Emotions and body language are often quite expressive and Punjabis tend to interact on much more of a personal level.

##### Religion

Sikhism was recorded as the religion of 432,429 people in the United Kingdom; 2011 Census. See Faith Chapter – Sikhism.

# 3. Religion – Faith Beliefs and views on Organ Donation of the UK Six Major Religions

## a) Buddhism

Buddhism is a tradition that focuses on personal spiritual development. Buddhists strive for a deep insight into the true nature of life and do not worship gods or deities. Buddhism is divided into a number of different traditions. However, most traditions share a common set of fundamental beliefs.

One fundamental belief of Buddhism is often referred to as reincarnation – the concept that people are reborn after dying. In fact, most individuals go through many cycles of birth, living, death and rebirth. A practicing Buddhist differentiates between the concepts of rebirth and reincarnation. In reincarnation, the individual may recur repeatedly. In rebirth, a person does not necessarily return to Earth as the same entity ever again. He compares it to a leaf growing on a tree. When the withering leaf falls off, a new leaf will eventually replace it. It is similar to the old leaf, but it is not identical to the original leaf.

After many such cycles, if a person releases their attachment to desire and the self, they can attain Nirvana. This is a state of liberation and freedom from suffering.

Mediation and observance of moral precepts are the foundation of Buddhist practice. The five basic moral precepts are to refrain from taking life, stealing, acting unchastely, speaking falsely and drinking intoxicants.

Ordained Buddhists are often collectively referred to as the Sangha and places of worship are Vihara, also known in the West as a Buddhist Temple.

England and Wales, according to the 2011 Census, has been recorded to have 247,743 people following the Buddhist belief.

### Modesty and dress

There are no particular points to be noted in this area.

### Diet

There are no set prescriptions for food in Buddhism, although many Buddhists are vegetarian or vegan due to the concept of Ahimsa (doing no harm). However, some Buddhists are non-vegetarian as the Buddha asked his monks to eat whatever they received.

Some Buddhists fast on the new moon and full moon days, and on specific festival days such as Buddha's birthday, his death day, his enlightenment, his first sermon and others. Some may follow a precept that involves eating only one main meal a day. This is usually eaten before midday.

### Hygiene

There are no daily washing rituals followed.

### Death customs

The manner of consideration for the dying will depend on the Buddhist group.

The most important consideration relates to the patient's state of mind at the time of death, for this will influence how they experience the intermediate or 'bardo' states and thereafter the character of rebirth. Nearing the time of death, the state of mind should ideally be one of peace.

Family members may wish to meditate around the dying patient to nurture this peace. Some families may ask for counselling from a fellow Buddhist, with a recitation of prayers or sacred texts. Often a Buddha figure is placed close by the dying patient.

**DO:** ensure the Buddha figure remains close to the dying patient at all times.

After death, in many schools of Buddhism, there is no ritual requirement and normal hospital procedures are accepted. However, some Buddhists hold strong views about how the body should be treated after death.

**DO:** ask the family which specific form or school of Buddhism the patient practises and fulfil any specific death customs as to how the body is to be treated according to the individual practice.

After death, the main Buddhist tradition is for the family to request prayers from the Sangha (usually a monk, lama, nun, priest or order member) of the appropriate school of Buddhism and to perform certain actions and dedicate them to the dead person.

Buddhists can dispose of a dead body by any of the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) – whichever is appropriate to the country and people. Traditions vary as there are different schools of thought. However, most Buddhists are cremated and the body should be disposed of within three to seven days.

### Buddhism and organ donation

There are no injunctions in Buddhism for or against organ donation. The death process of an individual is viewed as a very important time that should be treated with the greatest care and respect. In some traditions, the moment of death is defined according to criteria which differ from those of modern Western medicine, and there are differing views as to the acceptability of organ transplantation. The needs and wishes of the dying person must not be compromised by the wish to save a life. Each decision will depend on individual circumstances. Central to Buddhism is a wish to relieve suffering and there may be circumstances where organ donation may be seen as an act of generosity. Where it is truly the wish of the dying person, it would be seen in that light. If there is doubt as to the teachings within the particular tradition to which a person belongs, expert guidance should be sought from a senior teacher within the tradition concerned.

**“What loss do I suffer to give an unwanted organ after my death to give another person life?”**

Dr Desmond Biddulph,  
*Chairman of The Buddhist Society*

When he discovered a monk sick and uncared for, the Buddha said to the other monks:

**“Whoever would care for me, let him care for those who are sick.”**

*Mahavagga VIII.26. 1-8, Kucchivikaravatthu:*

The Monk with Dysentery.  
Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

There are many different Buddhist traditions, and organ donation is an individual choice, but:

**“Giving is the greatest of Buddhist virtues. The Buddha in a previous life gave his body to a starving tigress who could not feed her cubs. There are many such Jataka tales some in which he even gave his eyes to someone who wanted them.”**

Dr Desmond Biddulph,  
*Chairman of The Buddhist Society*

**“I would be happy if I was able to help someone else live after my own death.”**

Dhammarati, Western Buddhist Order

**“Non-attachment to the body can be seen in the context of non-attachment to self and Buddhist teachings on impermanence. Compassion is a pre-eminent quality. Giving one’s body for the good of others is seen as a virtue.”**

The Amida Trust

**“Organ donation is acceptable in Theravada Buddhism. It is a Buddhist virtue to generously extend help to other sentient beings and this covers the case of organ donation.”**

Phramaha Laow Panyasiri,  
*Abbot, The Buddhavihara Temple*

## b) Christianity

Christianity is a world-wide religion followed by people of many different cultures and backgrounds. Although Christians hold much in common, there is a wide diversity of beliefs, ethical standpoints and forms of worship among the many denominations and groups which make up the Christian Church. The majority of Christians in the UK are Anglican (known as Church of England) though there are many other Protestants and Roman Catholics.

The core belief of Christianity is the doctrine of Trinity: there is one God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At the centre of Christian belief is Jesus, who is regarded as the revelation of God. For most Christians this revelation is such that he is understood to be the incarnation of God.

The Christian Scriptures are found in the Bible and key Christian practices are baptism and Holy Communion (or Eucharist). Prayer and meditation are important to Christians in their daily life.

Key Christian practices (depending on denomination) are Holy Communion, Confession, Absolution and the Anointing of the Sick. Prayer is also very important to Christians.

Spiritual leaders are called priests, ministers or vicars and places of worship are called Churches and Cathedrals.

### Modesty and dress

Some Christians may wear the Christian Cross in the form of a necklace. It is seen as a representation of God's love for the human race demonstrated in the instrument of the Crucifixion of Jesus and is the best known symbol of Christianity.

### Diet

There are no universal Christian dietary or fasting regulations. However, some Christians fast on particular days and at particular times of the year. Some Christians give up certain foods during Lent (a 40-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter). Other Christians observe Friday as a no-meat day or may fast before receiving Holy Communion.

### Hygiene

There are no daily washing rituals followed.

### Death customs

Dying patients of all Christian denominations may wish for the services of the appropriate chaplain. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is administered to Catholic patients. Similar services are conducted by some other denominations also. A chaplain or minister usually performs these services.

Some families may wish to ensure a Christian Cross is kept close to the dying patient. Many Catholics will also wish to leave Rosary prayer beads close to the patient

**DO:** ensure these religious symbols remain close to the patient at all times

Christians are buried in consecrated ground, which is an area that is blessed or a cemetery where other Christians are buried, although cremation is also an accepted option for most Christian denominations.

## Organ donation and Christianity

The Christian faith is based upon the revelation of God in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught people to love one another and to embrace the needs of others. Organ donation can be considered by Christians as a genuine act of love. We can choose to donate our organs to save the lives of many people:

**“Thousands of people in the UK today are waiting for an organ transplant that could save or dramatically improve their lives. The simple act of joining the donor register can help make the world of difference to those in need. I hope that everyone will consider whether they can give life to others after their own death.”**

†Sentamu Ebor, *Archbishop of York, 2010*

**“The Methodist Church has consistently supported organ donation and transplantation in appropriate circumstances, as a means through which healing and health may be made possible.”**

Methodist Church UK

**“Identifying specific faith groups and their beliefs and practice around organ donation provides a basis for discussion. We then need to share information on what faith groups believe in order to foster better understanding of cultural norms. Disseminating more widely information on the cultural risk factors for kidney disease keeps people informed, assists in breaking barriers and engendering hope as people make better health choices which will positively impact their life.”**

Sharon Platt-McDonald, Director for Health, Women Ministries & Disability Awareness for the Seventh-Day Adventist Churches in the British Isles. To donate your organs is a very personal choice. The process of transplantation is acceptable in terms of moral Christian law. The Catechism of the Catholic Church 2296 explains:

**“...organ transplants are in conformity with the moral law if the physical and psychological dangers and risks to the donor are proportionate to the good sought for the recipient. Organ**

**donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity.**

**“It is not morally acceptable if the donor or his proxy has not given explicit consent. Moreover, it is not morally admissible to bring about the disabling mutilation or death of a human being, even in order to delay the death of other persons.”**

As Christians we believe in eternal life and preparing for death should not be a source of fear. Nothing that happens to our body, before or after death, can impact on our relationship with God:

**“Neither death nor life, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Romans 8:38-9

Ensuring that we are on the NHS Organ Donor Register and that our relatives know our wishes in advance will help to relieve our loved ones of anxiety if the opportunity to donate arises, because:

**“Giving organs is the most generous act of self-giving imaginable.”**

Rt Revd Dr Barry Morgan, *Archbishop of Wales, 2011*

## c) Hinduism

Hinduism originated in India and developed over five thousand years ago, although elements of the faith are much older. Hinduism has no single founder, no single scripture, and no commonly agreed set of teachings. Throughout its extensive history, there have been many key figures teaching different philosophies and writing numerous holy books. It is best understood as a group of closely connected religious traditions rather than a single religion and so is referred to as 'a way of life'. Those who follow Hinduism are called 'Hindu'.

Hinduism is characterised by the belief in reincarnation, one absolute being of multiple manifestations, the law of cause and effect, following the righteous path and the desire of liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

Hindu believe in one God named as "Brahman" but view other Gods and Goddesses as manifestations of Him. They worship "Brahman" under many manifestations, deities or images. Examples of Hindu deities are Krishna, Shiva, Rama and Durga. Hindu believe that all prayers addressed to any form or manifestation will ultimately reach the one God. Hinduism does not prescribe particular dogmas, rather it asks individuals to worship God according to their own belief. It therefore allows a great deal of freedom in matters of faith and worship.

The oldest sacred texts of Hinduism are called Vedas, although there are many other texts that are considered important too. Hindu scriptures are collectively referred to as 'Shastras'. There are no set times for prayers, however, most Hindu pray at least once a day, usually in the morning. Worship is usually individual rather than communal and can take place in any location.

Spiritual leaders are called Pandits and places of worship are called Mandir or in the West referred to as the 'Hindu Temple'.

Results from the 2011 census record that Hinduism was the religion of 817,000 people in England and Wales.

### Modesty and dress

Hindu women wear a coloured spot on their foreheads as a sign of their marital status. This mark is called a 'bhindi'.

**DO NOT:** wash this bhindi off. A Hindu woman wears this bhindi with pride and importance.

Married Hindu women may also wear a special necklace of black and golden beads; this indicates devotion to her husband. Men and women may also wear thread bangles (usually red in colour) for spiritual protection.

**DO NOT:** remove these items without seeking permission first.

## Diet

Many Hindu are strict vegetarians, abstaining from all meat, fish and eggs. Dairy produce is acceptable so long as it is free of animal rennet.

The cow is viewed as a sacred animal so even meat-eating Hindu may not eat beef. Some do not eat pork either as pigs are considered unclean.

**NOTE:** strict vegetarians will be unhappy about eating vegetarian items if they are served from the same plate or with the same utensils as meat.

Fasting is a regular feature of the Hindu religion. Some fasts may only require abstinence from certain foods, whilst others may involve complete abstinence.

## Hygiene

The concept of purity is important to Hindu life, in both physical and spiritual terms.

Hindus will require water for washing in the same room as the toilet itself.

**NOTE:** therefore a small container of water may be taken into the cubicle for the purpose of washing if there is no tap there.

## Death customs

When a Hindu is dying, the priest and family members gather around the bedside to be with the dying person. Mantras are chanted or sometimes a recording of mantras being chanted are played. The priest may perform certain rituals including: the tying of a sacred thread around the neck or wrist; placing a few drops of holy water into the patient's mouth; placing a sacred tulsi leaf (holy basil) in the patient's mouth.

**NOTE:** sacred threads and beads should be left on the body. If it is necessary to remove these beads, permission should be sought from the next of kin.

Hindus believe in reincarnation. Although the physical body dies, the soul has no beginning and no end. It may pass to another reincarnation depending on one's Karma (the consequences of actions over one's lifetimes). The Hindu's believe that if the soul has realised the true nature of reality, it may become one with the Brahman, the 'One'.

After death, the body should always be left covered. Relatives will wish to wash the body and put on new clothes before taking it from the hospital. Traditionally the eldest son of the deceased takes a leading part in this.

Some Hindu families position the body in a certain manner after death.

**DO:** ask the family if they have a preference for the positioning of the body.

Hindus are cremated and have a preference for this to take place as soon after the death as possible. Young infants and children are buried. Often the eldest son starts the cremation and the ashes are scattered into flowing water or taken to India to be scattered on the waters of the River Ganga.

The cremation of the deceased marks the beginning of a 13 day mourning period. During this time, the family will stay at home and receive visitors. Mourning rituals may differ depending on the community.

## Hinduism and organ donation

There are many references that support the concept of organ donation in Hindu scriptures. Daan is the original word in Sanskrit for donation, meaning selfless giving. In the list of the ten Niyamas (virtuous acts) Daan comes third.

**“Of all the things that it is possible to donate, to donate your own body is infinitely more worthwhile.”**

The Manusmriti

**“In the joy of others lies our own.”**

His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj,  
*BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha*

Life after death is a strong belief of Hindus and is an ongoing process of rebirth. The law of Karma decides which way the soul will go in the next life. The Bhagavad Gita describes the mortal body and the immortal soul in a simple way like the relationship of clothes to a body:

**“Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya navani grhnati naro 'parani tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany anyani samyati navandi dehi.”**

Bhagavad Gita, *chapter 2:22*

**“As a person puts on new garments giving up the old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies giving up the old and useless ones.”**

Bhagavad Gita, *chapter 2:22*

Scientific and medical treatises (Charaka and Sushruta Samhita) form an important part of the Vedas. Sage Charaka deals with internal medicine while Sage Sushruta includes features of organ and limb transplants:

**“Organ donation is in keeping with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the life of others.”**

The Late Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE,  
*President, National Council of Hindu Temples*

**“I always carry my donor card with me. It says that my whole body can be used for organ donation and medical purposes after my death. I would like to encourage as many people as possible to do the same.”**

The Late Dr Bal Mukund Bhala,  
*Coordinator Hindu International Medical Mission,  
Former President Hindu Council UK*

**“I believe in organ donation. If my body can help someone else live a better quality of life after my soul has vacated it then it is good Seva.”**

The Late Mr Arjan Vekaria JP,  
*Former President Hindu Forum of Britain*

## d) Islam

Islam began in Arabia and was revealed to humanity by the Prophet Muhammad. Those who follow Islam are called Muslims. Muslims believe that there is only one God. The Arabic word for God is Allah.

Muslims believe that God sent a number of Prophets to mankind to teach them how to live according to His laws. Jesus, Moses and Abraham are respected as Prophets of God and Muhammad is believed to be the final Prophet.

The Qu’ran is the holy book for Muslims, revealed in stages to the Prophet Muhammad. Qu’ran revelations are regarded as the sacred word of God. The practical examples of the Prophet Muhammad’s life are referred to as the Sunnah. Muslims base their beliefs on the Qu’ran and the Sunnah and follow the obligatory ‘Five Pillars of Islam’.

The basic statement of the Islamic faith is: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger”. This is known as the Shahada (Declaration of Faith) and is the first pillar of Islam.

The second pillar is to offer five specific daily prayers (Salat); the third is giving 2.5% of their annual savings as charity once a year (Zakaat); the fourth is fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm) and the final pillar is a pilgrimage to Makkah if one can afford it, once in a lifetime (Hajj).

**NOTE:** the five daily prayers are performed at broadly set times as follows:

- Dawn (Fajr)
- Just after noon (Zuhr)
- Late afternoon (Asr)
- Following sunset (Maghrib)
- Night time (Isha)

Muslims welcome privacy or a quiet space during prayer times. Prayer is performed facing the house of God (Kabah) in Makkah – Saudi Arabia (to the south-east in the UK).

Spiritual leaders are called Imams and places of worship are Mosques.

Islam in the UK is the second largest religion with results from the 2011 Census giving the UK Muslim population in 2011 as 2,786,635, 4.4% of the total population.

### Modesty and dress

Modesty is an obligatory requirement in the Islamic faith. As part of Islamic beliefs women often wear a head scarf (hijab) as principle modesty in terms of dress and behaviour and men are also instructed to practice modesty of the eyes.

**NOTE:** a Muslim male may look away from women who may not be modestly dressed as a sign of respect and not disregard.

**NOTE:** similarly a Muslim female may look away from a male as a mean to preserve her own modesty.

**DO:** ensure your dress code is modest. Women should avoid short skirts and low necks revealing cleavage.

**DO:** continue to preserve the modesty of the dying women. Covering the hair of an intubated woman would mean a lot to her family if during her lifetime she observed this practice.

### Diet

Muslims will eat only permitted food (halal) and will not eat or drink anything that is considered forbidden (haram).

Halal meat (meat that has been slaughtered and prepared according to religious ritual and law) is the only meat that can be eaten. Any products obtained from pigs or food containing lard or other animal fats, for example, rennet in cheese and gelatine are forbidden. Any food prepared near pork or non-halal meat is forbidden.

Fish and eggs are permitted. Alcohol is forbidden and smoking is discouraged.

Food and drink is eaten only with the right hand and utensils are not always used.

Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan (the date varies each year). At this time, Muslims will not eat or drink between dawn and sunset. The sick, infirm or very old need not fast. Fasting is also excused during menstruation, for 40 days after childbirth, while breastfeeding or during a long journey.

### Hygiene

Muslims attach great importance to cleanliness. Ablution, before reading the Qur'an or performing the daily prayers, is a necessity. Observant Muslims are required to wash following use of the toilet and will therefore appreciate access to water in the toilet cubicle.

**NOTE:** Muslims may carry a small container of water into the cubicle for the purpose of washing as toilet paper is considered inadequate.

### Death customs

Those who are dying are comforted by their families who recite passages from the Qur'an. This practice is carried out so that the soul can rest in peace once it departs the body. Extended family members are encouraged to visit the poorly and the dying.

The moistening of the lips or the encouragement to swallow 'Zam Zam' (Holy water) is encouraged. (Pakistani communities mainly follow this practice).

At the time of death, wailing is discouraged from an Islamic perspective but many Muslims, women in particular, may follow this traditional practice.

Ghusal (ritual full body wash) is performed on the deceased before the body is wrapped in a white shroud and positioned to face Makkah (south east).

**DO:** if possible try to position the face of the dying patient/deceased facing Makkah (south east). A Muslim family will greatly appreciate this action.

Once the funeral prayer is performed at the Mosque the body is taken to the cemetery for burial. The burial is only attended by men.

Some Muslims (Pakistanis in particular) arrange for the body to be taken for burial in the homeland.

Muslims require the body to be buried as soon as possible after death. Cremation is forbidden.

**NOTE:** in view of the Islamic faith's requirement for the body to be buried as soon as possible after death, often the family, friends and community support network begin to organise funeral arrangements when they hear of an imminent death.

**NOTE:** in the case of a potential DCD it is important to explain to the family that withdrawal of treatment may not necessarily lead to immediate death and, therefore, such arrangements should not be finalised.

**DO:** explain to families that you understand their faith's requirement for a prompt burial upon death and also take the time to explain hospital procedures around death certificates, Coroner issues etc.

**DO:** try to address this concern before organ donation is raised. This may potentially alleviate the family's anxiety for a prompt burial.

Muslims believe there should be three days of mourning before life should resume as normal. The widow must observe a period of four months and ten days of mourning from the day of her husband's death, or until her baby is due if she is pregnant.

## Islam and organ donation

In Islam there are two schools of thought with regard to organ donation. The human body, whether living or dead, enjoys a special honour and is inviolable, and fundamentally, Islamic law emphasises the preservation of human life.

The general rule that **'necessities permit the prohibited'** (al-darurat tubih al-mahzurat), has been used to support human organ donation with regard to saving or significantly enhancing the life of another provided that the benefit outweighs the personal cost that has to be borne.

The following are some verses which have been used to support organ donation:

**"Whosoever saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind."**

Holy Qur'an, chapter 5, vs. 32

**"Whosoever helps another will be granted help from Allah."**

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

**"If you happened to be ill and in need of a transplant, you certainly would wish that someone would help you by providing the needed organ."**

Sheikh Dr MA Zaki Badawi,  
Principal, Muslim College, London

An alternative view clearly states that:

**"The saving of life is not absolute, but subject to the amount of cost that has to be borne. Therefore, although the above quotation enjoins the saving of life this is not without restriction or caveats". According to a similarly large number of Muslim scholars organ donation is not permitted. They consider that organ donation compromises the special honour accorded to man and this cannot be allowed whatever the cost. Scholars, such as the Islamic Fiqh Academy of India, allow live donations only."**

Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt,  
Muslim Council of Britain

Therefore it is very clear that in Islam:

**"Organ donation is a very personal choice and one should consider seeking the opinion of a scholar of their choosing."**

Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt,  
Muslim Council of Britain

That said, one of the fundamental purposes of Islamic law is the preservation of life. Allah greatly rewards those who save the life of others.

## e) Judaism

Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions and was founded over 3,500 years ago in the Middle East. Jews believe that God appointed the Jews to be his chosen people in order to set an example of holiness and ethical behaviour to the world.

Jews believe that there is a single God who not only created the universe, but with whom every Jew can have a personal relationship. The Hebrew word for this one true God is YHWH, or Yahweh.

Although Judaism has a rich history of religious text, the Torah is one of the holy books for Jews. Jews believe that God dictated the Torah to Moses on a Mount. They believe that the Torah shows how God wants Jews to live. It contains 613 commandments and Jews refer to the ten best known of these as the 'Ten Commandments'. These are as follows:

- Worship no other God but me
- Do not make images to worship
- Do not misuse the name of God
- Observe the Sabbath day (Saturday). Keep it Holy
- Honour and respect your father and mother
- Do not murder
- Do not commit adultery
- Do not steal
- Do not accuse anyone falsely. Do not tell lies about other people.
- Do not envy others' possessions.

Jews also follow the 'Oral Torah' referred to as the Talmud. This is a tradition explaining what the Jewish Scriptures mean and how to interpret them and apply the laws. Jews believe God taught the Oral Torah to Moses, and he taught it to others, down to the present day.

Every week religious Jews observe the Sabbath, the Jewish Holy day. The Sabbath begins at nightfall on Friday and lasts until nightfall on Saturday. Before dusk on Friday, candles are lit and a prayer of blessing is said over wine and bread before a festive meal. After dark on Saturday night, a prayer of farewell is said over a candle, wine and spices.

Jews often call the day Shabbat, which is Hebrew for Sabbath and means rest. The idea of a day of rest comes from the Bible story of the Creation; God rested from creating the universe on the seventh day of that first week, so Jews rest from work on the Sabbath. It is a time for families to come together in the presence of God in their own home.

**NOTE:** Shabbat is a time for Jews to rest from the day to day stresses of life. It is regarded as a time of stillness in life. During Shabbat Jews avoid busy schedules or stressful situations.

Observant Jewish men and women pray three times a day in the morning, afternoon and evening and would appreciate privacy for this. Prayer is performed facing Jerusalem (to the east in the UK).

Spiritual leaders are called Rabbis and places of worship are called Synagogues.

The UK is home to the second largest Jewish population in Europe. According to the 2011 Census, 263,346 people answered "Jewish" to the voluntary question on religion.

### Modesty and dress

Modesty is of the utmost importance for both men and women as Jewish culture and tradition places emphasis on the soul inside rather than the physical features that are external. Orthodox Jewish women tend to wear clothing that is not too bright or tight-fitting, with sleeves that cover the elbows and skirts that cover the knees. Married Jewish women typically cover their hair with a scarf, hat or wig as a sign that they are married. Their natural hair should only be seen by their husbands.

**NOTE:** Jewish women that wear wigs do not have shaved heads as is commonly thought.

**DO:** continue to preserve the modesty of the dying married women by ensuring her hair is covered. The option of a theatre cap may suffice if a wig or scarf is not possible.

Orthodox Jewish men wear a skull cap called a Yarmulke, Kipah or Kappel. It is customary for Jewish boys to start to wear a Yarmulke by the age of three. Wearing a Yarmulke is a unique sign to recognise an orthodox Jew.

**DO:** continue to preserve the modesty of the dying man too. It would mean a lot to a Jewish family if this practice was respected at the time of death.

### Hygiene

Orthodox Jews follow a hand washing ritual before eating bread and some may not eat or drink anything before following this ritual. A cup with water is poured over the right hand and then the left and once the hands are washed a blessing is recited.

**NOTE:** this hand washing ritual has nothing to do with physical cleanliness but is a religious practice.

### Diet

Judaism lays down strict guidelines concerning some aspects of their diet. Acceptable food is called Kosher. Kosher refers to food that conforms to the regulation of the Jewish Dietary Law (Kashrut).

**NOTE:** contrary to popular belief, food is not blessed by Rabbis or religious officials to make it Kosher.

Dairy and meat should not be mixed. Therefore, a vegetarian option including cheese may also be declined as most cheese contains rennet (extract from the stomach of certain animals).

**DO NOT:** offer a vegetarian option as an alternative to non-Kosher food. Rather discuss with the family what will be a suitable alternative.

Jews do not eat any pork or pork products or any shellfish.

Jews will observe a 25 hour fast beginning before sunset on the evening before Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), their most holy day of the year.

There are five further fasts, four of them minor, that last from dawn to nightfall, and a person is permitted to eat breakfast if up before sunrise.

The fifth fast takes place in July or August and begins in the evening at sunset and finishes at nightfall.

### Death customs

In the final stages of illness, a Jewish patient's family will recite Psalms by the bedside. Spending time with the dying patient in the final moments is of immense importance to the Jewish family. Staying with the dying patient as he/she passes from this world to the next is regarded as an act of great honour and respect.

**NOTE:** for this reason, relatives may choose not to leave the bedside.

When a Jewish person dies, the following guidelines apply according to the Jewish law:

- A body must not be touched until 20 minutes after death.
- A body must not be washed (although cleaning of crevices can be performed if required to preserve the dignity of the deceased).
- False teeth or other prostheses must not be removed.
- The eyes must be closed
- The body must be straightened; laying it flat with the feet together and arms by the side.
- The body must be covered with a plain white sheet without any symbols.

Jewish families will want to ensure that someone from the Jewish community remains to sit with the body as the deceased should not be left alone until the funeral and, for this reason, they require the body to be buried as soon as possible after death.

**NOTE:** in Western society this often causes a degree of practical difficulty. However wherever possible endeavour to accommodate someone staying with the body until transfer to the mortuary. A Jewish family will greatly appreciate this accommodation of their religious practice at the time of death.

Jewish mourning practices can be broken into several periods of decreasing intensity, allowing the mourner to gradually return to a normal life. The first period is called 'Shiva' meaning seven; this takes place over the seven days immediately following the funeral. During this period family gather together at home to mourn and pray. Guests visit to forward condolences and life's daily routine is halted until after the seven days. The second period of mourning is called 'Scloshim' meaning 'thirty'; this period lasts until the thirtieth day after the funeral. During this period daily life routine is resumed but mourners will continue to recite the Mourner's Kaddish (a hymn of praise to God) daily. If a parent dies then the formal mourning period lasts an entire year.

### Judaism and organ donation

In principle Judaism sanctions and encourages organ donation in order to save lives (*pikuach nefesh*). This principle can override the Jewish objections to any unnecessary interference with the body after death, and the requirement for immediate burial. It is understandable that there will be worries and concerns for the Jewish family who are asked to consider organ donation. At a time of stress and grief, linked to sudden unexpected illness and death, reaching a decision can be difficult for them. They may be worried that giving consent may not be consistent with the honour and respect that Jews believe is due to the dead (*kavod hamet*). Judaism considers each case as different and recognises that at this time any known wishes of the dead person

can be valuable. For example, some people will tell their families to consult with specific Rabbis or religious authorities. Some Jewish groups encourage their members to join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

In Judaism, whether or not the wishes of the dead person are known, it is widely recognised that families are entitled to decide for themselves, and that they will often wish to consult with their own experts in Jewish law and tradition before making a final decision. Judaism holds that organs may not be removed from a donor until death has definitely occurred. Again, for some Jews the 'brain stem death' criteria are acceptable. Other Jews will only agree to the removal of organs from a 'Donation after Circulatory Death'. The latter approach may cause problems concerning heart and lung transplants, where time is of the essence, but does not exclude donation of other organs. After donation, it is important to recognise that *kavod hamet* still applies. In Judaism avoidance of any further unnecessary interference with the body and immediate internment are again the prime concern. Judaism, therefore, approaches the question of organ donation very much on a case-by-case basis. Also, on an individual basis, if the families wish to seek advice, in most instances they would make an approach to their own known and respected religious adviser. If they are unable to obtain such advice easily, or in circumstances of uncertainty, the main religious organisations (e.g. United Synagogue, Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, Spanish and Portuguese Synagogues, Federation of Synagogues, Masorti Synagogues, Reform Judaism, Union of Liberal and Progressive Judaism) can provide useful supportive information. In all instances, the principles of *kavod hamet* and *pikuach nefesh* would be considered, and in addition during the difficult decision process Judaism would also incorporate another principle, which must not be neglected: that of providing *nichum aveilim* – comfort for those who are bereaved.

**“One who saves a single life – it is as if he has saved an entire world.”**

Pirke D'Rav Eliezer, Chapter 48

## f) Sikhism

Sikhism was founded in the 16th century by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The religion is based on his teachings and that of the 9 Gurus who followed him. Those who follow Sikhism are called Sikhs. The word 'Sikh' means 'disciple' in the Punjabi language. Sikhs are the disciples of God who follow the writings and teaching of the Ten Gurus.

Sikhs believe that there is one God, that God is without form or gender and that everyone has direct access to God and is equal before God.

The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy book for Sikhs. The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, declared that there would be no other living Gurus but instead Sikhs could look to their holy book for guidance and so the Holy book became the 'Guru' (teacher).

A Sikh's way of life is guided by the following principles:

- Remembering and praying to God at all times
- Earning a living by honest means
- Sharing with the poor and needy
- Selfless service to God and His Creation
- Treating all human beings as equal

Baptised Sikhs wear five articles of faith:

- Uncut hair (Kesh)
- A small wooden comb (Kangha)
- An iron/steel bangle (Kara)
- A short sword (Kirpan)
- Special shorts (Kachhera)

**NOTE:** these articles have deep spiritual and moral significance, forming part of the Sikh Code of Ethics and Discipline and so must not be removed.

**DO:** acknowledge the significance of these articles with Sikh families and discuss any potential matters that may arise. For example, if a Sikh family consent

to organ donation; do discuss the possibility of the chest hair having to be shaved. Or negotiate with the retrieval team the requirement for the chest hair to remain unshaven.

The Sikh faith does not have any ordained clergy and any women or man can lead religious services. Granthis are people who have studied the Sikh scriptures extensively and are available in the Gurdwaras as teachers. Gurdwaras are Sikh places of worship.

Results from the 2011 Census recorded that Sikhism was the religion of 432,429 people in the UK.

### Modesty and dress

The five articles of the Sikh faith must not be removed.

Baptised Sikh men always have their uncut hair in a turban, and baptised Sikh women will also cover their hair.

**DO:** discuss with the family in a sensitive manner if a turban is required to be removed. The turban is worn to maintain the sanctity of Kesh (hair) and is treated with the utmost respect.

Sikh women wear a long Punjabi scarf (chunni) for the same purpose.

**DO:** continue to preserve the modesty of the dying person. Ensuring the five articles of the Sikh faith remain would mean a lot to a Sikh family if during the deceased's lifetime this practice was observed.

### Diet

Baptised Sikhs are vegetarians and will exclude eggs, fish and any ingredients with animal derivatives or food cooked in animal fat. Tobacco and alcohol are strictly forbidden to baptised Sikhs.

Sikhs do not believe in ritual killings and therefore those that do eat meat will refrain from eating meat that has been killed by such rites. (Halal or Kosher meat).

Practicing Sikhs will also refrain from alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants.

Sikhs do not fast.

### Hygiene

Cleanliness is a part of a Sikhs way of life. Sikhs will want to wash their hands and also rinse their mouths before meals.

Uncut hair is kept clean and neat by washing regularly and combing twice a day.

### Death customs

In the final stages of illness, a Sikh patient will be comforted by reciting hymns from the Sikh Holy Scriptures.

The Sikh symbol (Khanda) is often placed near or on the head of the deceased in order to show respect and confirm their belief in God.

**DO:** respect this symbol and ensure it remains close to the head at all times.

Sikhs believe in reincarnation and death is regarded as the progression of the soul on its journey from God, through the created universe and back to God again.

The public display of grief at a funeral, such as wailing or crying out loud is discouraged and is kept to a minimum.

The body is washed and attired in clean clothing. The hair is covered with a turban or traditional scarf as usually worn by the deceased. The five articles of faith also remain with the body in death.

**NOTE:** whilst caring for the dying patient or the deceased, ensure that none of the five articles of faith on the body of a Sikh are disturbed.

**DO NOT:** trim the hair or beard.

**DO:** keep the hair on the head covered.

Sikhs are cremated and have a preference for this to take place soon after the death as possible. Often the eldest son starts the cremation and the ashes are either scattered into flowing water or taken to India to be scattered.

### Sikhism and organ donation

The Sikh philosophy and teachings place great emphasis on the importance of giving and putting others before oneself:

**“Where self exists, there is no God. Where God exists, there is no self.”**

Guru Nanak (*founder of Sikh faith, and first of ten Gurus*), *Guru Granth Sahib*  
(Sikh Holy Scripture)

Sikh Gurus devoted their lives for the benefit of humanity and some even sacrificed their lives looking after the welfare of others. The Guru Granth Sahib says:

**“Within this world take the opportunity for selfless service to others; then in divine abode we get the chance to be.”**

**“The Eternal will embrace you”.**

Seva or selfless service is at the core of being a Sikh: to give without seeking reward or recognition and know that all seva is known to and appreciated by the Eternal. Seva can also be the donation of one's organ to another. There are no taboos attached to organ donation in Sikhi, nor is there a requirement that a body should have all its organs intact at or after death. According to Sikhi the soul migrates in a perpetual cycle of rebirth but the physical body is only a vessel in its long journey, left behind each time and dissolved into the elements, as the Guru Granth Sahib says in Asaa Mahala 5:

**“That time, which the mortal does not wish for, eventually comes. Without the Eternal's order the understanding of mortality is never understood. The body is consumed by water, fire and earth. But the soul is neither young nor old, O human, thus it is the soul and not the body which continues its journey.”**

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**“The Sikh religion teaches that life continues after death in the soul, and not the physical body. The last act of giving and helping others through organ donation is both consistent with and in the spirit of Sikh teachings.”**

Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, *Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK* (endorsed by Sikh Authorities in Amritsar, Punjab). The Sikh faith stresses the importance of performing noble deeds. There are many examples of selfless giving and sacrifice in Sikh teachings by the ten Gurus and other Sikhs:

**“Guru Har Krishen, our eighth Guru, gave his life helping sufferers during a smallpox epidemic. It is entirely consistent with his spirit of service that we consider donating organs after death to give life and hope to others... In my family we all carry donor cards and would encourage all Sikhs to do so.”**

Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, *Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK* Donating one's organ to another so that the person may live is one of the greatest gifts and ultimate seva to human kind and hence Satguru says:

**“Through selfless service, eternal peace is obtained. The Gurumukhi is absorbed in intuitive peace.”**

Guru Granth Sahib says:

**“Donation without reward is one of the characteristics of a Guru's Sikhs. The life of Gurumukhi is useful because by their natural temperament they are donors. And why not donate an organ so another can live?”**

Dr Jasdev Rai, British Sikh Consultative Forum (BSCF)  
The Guru Granth further says:

**“Through virtuous deeds, the dead establish a bond with the living.”**

# 4. Resources

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## Resources and Websites

**Caring for Dying People of Different Faiths.** 3rd Edition. Neuberger J 2004.

**Culture Competency Toolkit.** West London Mental Health NHS Trust 2007.

**Religious, Spiritual, Pastoral and Cultural Care.** South Devon NHS Healthcare and Teignbridge Primary Care Trust.

**End-of-Life Decision Making across Cultures.** Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics. Blank H. R. 2011.

**Religion and Cultures, Guide to Beliefs, Customs and Diversity for Health and Social Care Services: revised edition.** Dr M.E. Jogie 2004.

**Religion or Belief – A practical guide for the NHS.** DH Jan 2009.

**Relating to the Relatives.** Brewin T and Sparshott M 1996.

**Office of National Statistics.** <http://www.ons.gov.uk/taxonomy/index.html?nsci=Population>

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

[www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions)

[www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com)

[www.chaplins.co.uk](http://www.chaplins.co.uk)

[www.diversityon.com](http://www.diversityon.com)

[www.ethnicityonline.net](http://www.ethnicityonline.net)

[www.kwintessential.co.uk](http://www.kwintessential.co.uk)

[www.mfghc.com](http://www.mfghc.com)

[www.nbta-uk.org.uk](http://www.nbta-uk.org.uk)

[www.religionfacts.com](http://www.religionfacts.com)

[www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk)







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## **NHS Blood and Transplant**

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) saves and improves lives by providing a safe, reliable and efficient supply of blood and associated services to the NHS in England. We are the organ donor organisation for the UK and are responsible for matching and allocating donated organs.

We rely on thousands of members of the public who voluntarily donate their blood, organs, tissues and stem cells. Their generosity means each year we're able to supply around 1.9 million units of blood to hospitals in England and around 4,200 organ and 5,800 tissue donations within the UK, which save or improve thousands of lives.

### **For more information**

**Visit** [nhsbt.nhs.uk](https://nhsbt.nhs.uk)

**Email** [enquiries@nhsbt.nhs.uk](mailto:enquiries@nhsbt.nhs.uk)

**Call** **0300 123 23 23**