



The Faith Handbook



There are many faiths in our society. Faith can influence the lives of believers.



We do not want to put someone in an awkward situation because we do not know what is important to them.



It is polite to listen to what matters to people.
Religion and spiritual practice can be important to them.
Isolation from these practices can affect their health and wellbeing.



Customs and practices will be different in different faith communities.
People who live in different places might express their faith differently.



This Handbook has information about some of the practices of different faiths in West Lothian.



West Lothian's Faith Population



In West Lothian, there are places of worship for Christian and Muslim communities.



The 2011 census told us that people in West Lothian belong to the following faiths:
Church of Scotland; Roman Catholic; Other Christian; Muslim; Sikh; Buddhist; Hindu; Jewish or another religion.



Some people said they had no religion or they did not answer the question.



There might not be a lot of people who belong to some of these faiths living in West Lothian.
These people may go to a place of worship outside West Lothian.



Food and Fasting



Baha'i



- Baha'is have no specific dietary requirements.
- They fast between the 2nd and 20th March when they do not take food or drink between sunrise and sunset.
- Alcohol and habit forming drugs are not allowed



Brahma Kumaris



- Brahma Kumaris are vegetarian.
- They do not eat eggs.
- They are discouraged from using alcohol and recreational drugs.
- They like to have their food blessed by fellow Brahma Kumaris.



Buddhism



- Many Buddhists are vegetarian or vegan.
- Some Buddhists fast when it is a new moon or a full moon, as well as on specific festival days.



Christianity



- There are no dietary or fasting regulations that all Christians follow.
- All Christians take Holy Communion where believers share bread and wine in memory of Jesus' last supper with his disciples.



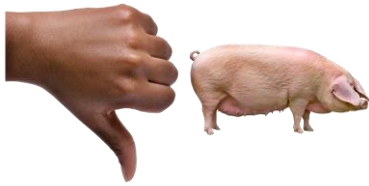
Hinduism



- Most Hindus are vegetarian.
- Some dedicated Hindus fast on special occasions, as a mark of respect to personal Gods, or as part of a penance.
- Some fasts may only require abstinence from certain foods.



Islam



- Muslims are not allowed to eat pork.
- The Qur'an lists the foods that can be eaten called halal food.
- It also lists the foods, which are forbidden called haram food.
- Halal meat is meat that has been processed according to Islamic tradition. Some Muslims will be careful with premade foods which could contain meat or alcohol.
- During the month of Ramadan Muslims do not eat, drink or smoke between sunrise and sunset.



Judaism



- The Torah lists the foods that people of the Jewish faith can and cannot eat.
- Jewish believers only eat food that has been prepared according to very complicated rules.
- This food is called kosher.
- Jews fast on certain days including Yom Kippur.
- During the Pesach there are other dietary rules.



Rastafarianism



- Most Rastafarians are vegetarian or vegan.
- Food that is approved to eat is called Ital.
- Alcohol is avoided because they believe it confuses the soul.



Sikhism



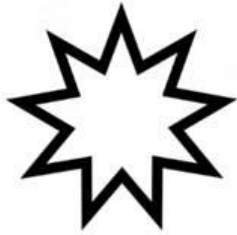
- Sikhs who are baptised might be vegetarian or vegan.
- Some might not drink alcohol.
- Most Sikhs will eat meat and do drink alcohol.
- Some Sikhs might only eat meat that has been processed according to Sikh

rites called Jhatka.

- Meat is not eaten in the Gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship.
- Sikhs are discouraged from fasting.



Customs around birth



Baha'i



There are no specific traditions/customs associated with the birth of a child.



Brahma Kumaris



People following this religion are unlikely to give birth to a child, as they do not have sexual relationships.



Buddhism



- There are no specific traditions/customs associated with the birth of a child.
- Buddhists in some other countries do have traditions when a child is born.



Christianity



- There are no specific traditions or customs associated with the birth of a child.
- Many Christians have their child baptised so they are members of the church.



Hinduism



- There are a number of different ceremonies associated with the birth of a child.
- The child is welcomed into the family by performing jatakarma.
- Some honey is put into the child's mouth and the name of God is whispered into the child's ear.

- There is a naming ceremony.
- There are ear piercing and first haircut ceremonies, which are very important. These ceremonies are performed for both boys and girls.
- The mother should have complete rest for 40 days after the birth of the child.



Islam



- When a child is born a family member should speak a call of prayer into the child's ear.
- The child's first taste should be of something sweet.
- The parents rub date juice on the child's gums.
- There are a number of events that take place 7 days after the child is born.
- The child's head is shaved.
- A name is chosen for the child. Boys are circumcised.
- There is a celebration on the 7th day called aqeeqah where meat is given to relatives, neighbours and poor people.



Judaism



- The Brit Milah is an important ceremony for boys.
- This is when they are circumcised and takes place when they are 8 days old.
- A trained religious person called a Mohel carries out the circumcision.
- Men attend the ceremony.
- Boys are given their name at this ceremony.
- Girls are named in the Synagogue on the Sabbath after their birth.



Sikhism



- There are a number of ceremonies that take place to welcome the child into the Sikh nation.
- As soon as possible after a child is born Amrit is prepared.
- Amrit is a ceremony involving the preparation of a mixture following special rules.
- This is given to both the child and the mother.
- The child is usually given a forename and if it is a boy,

then the surname is Singh
and Kaur if it is a girl.



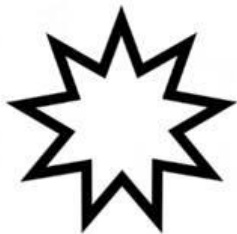
Rastafarianism



- When a child is born, community elders bless them.
- This is done during a session of drumming, chanting and prayer called Nyabingi.



Customs Around Death



Baha'i



- Baha'is treat the body of a dead person with great respect.
- The person should be buried in a place that is no more than an hour away from where they died.
- The body should not be cremated or embalmed.



Brahma Kumaris



- Brahma Kumaris prefer that a person is cremated rather than buried.
- Dedicated Brahma Kumaris prefer the body to be dressed in special white clothes.



Buddhism



- There are many different types of Buddhist so funeral traditions are different.
- The person can be either cremated or buried depending on their tradition.
- A funeral is usually a simple

service and objects that are significant to the person who has died surround the coffin.



Christianity



- When Christians are dying, they might want to have the services of their faith representative.
- There are many different types of Christian, so traditions around death are different.
- Catholic patients should be offered the sacrament of the sick.
- Endowed Mormons should be buried wearing special undergarments.



Hinduism



- After death, the body should be left covered.
- Family members prepare the body for cremation.



Islam



- Muslims must be buried within 24 hours of their death.
- The body of the dead person will be prepared and washed by someone of the same sex.
- The body is wrapped in a white shroud and prayers will be said.
- The body should not be cremated.



Judaism



- Members of the faith community will prepare the body of the dead person.
- In most Jewish communities the body will be buried and this should take place as soon as possible after death.



Sikhism



- After death the body will be washed and dressed in clean clothes by members of the family of the same sex.
- If the person has been baptised, then the 5 symbols of Sikh membership will be put in the coffin.



Other customs/practices of which to be aware



Islam



- Muslim men and women do not shake hands with each other.
- Muslim women will not be alone in a house with men who are not part of their family.
- Muslims sometimes remove their shoes when they enter a house.
- They will always remove their shoes when they enter their place of worship.

Some Muslims might think it is rude to make eye contact with someone.

There are 5 important duties for Muslims. They are:

- Praying - Muslims face Makkah when they pray.
- Declaring their faith - they tell people about the Islamic faith and Allah.
- Zakah - a person gives a percentage of their wealth to people in need.
- Fasting - they fast at certain times.
- Hajj - visit Makkah, which people need to do once in their lifetime.



Judaism



Jewish people face Jerusalem when they pray.

- They can pray alone.
- They can pray as a group.
- There are 3 daily prayers - morning, afternoon and evening.



Sikhism



When a Sikh is baptised, they have to wear the 5 Kakkars. They are:

- Kesh - uncut hair
- Kangha - a small wooden comb
- Kara - a bangle of pure iron
- Kirpan - a short sword
- Kachera - special shorts



Many Sikhs wear a turban, which is called a dastaar.

This is to ensure the Kesh or uncut hair is kept holy.



Some Sikhs will also avoid the 4 H's:

- Hukka - they must not take substances, which harm the body such as tobacco.
- Hajamat - they must not cut, remove or dye their hair. They must not have piercings or tattoos.
- Halalo - they must not eat meat, fish or eggs
- Haram - they must not commit adultery



Holy Days and Festivals



It is important to remember that there are different holy days and festivals.



People will want time off work for these festivals.



You can find out about these festivals on the Interfaith calendar: www.interfaithcalendar.org



Thinking about Spiritual Needs

It is helpful to know what we mean by spiritual needs.

Spiritual health can mean a sense of belonging through regular contact with others. It can mean practising religious faith and having a sense of meaning in life.

Spiritual dis-ease can mean isolation and insecurity. It can mean a loss of faith and a sense that life is meaningless.

- It is difficult to explain what is meant by spiritual needs.
- They are closely linked with emotions but that is not all.
- Spiritual needs affect the well being of individuals, so staff working with these people need to know about their spiritual needs.
- It is important that staff build a trusting relationship with religious communities.



Inter-faith Working in West Lothian



- The West Lothian Faith Group was set up so that faith groups could get together to share ideas and experiences and to talk to each other.
- Faith leaders and community representatives who can represent their faith tradition can be members of the group.
- The group meets 4 times a year



If you want more information about West Lothian Faith Group, then phone West Lothian Council's Community Planning team on 01506 281 086 or email them on community.planning@westlothian.gov.uk



Thanks to the Scottish Jewish Archive Centre for use of some of the photography.

