

Background to the briefing:

ICVA has a theme of Diversity and Equality for work to support schemes this year. As part of this work stream the National Expert Forum was consulted regarding a range of work products, one of which was the storage of religious items in custody. This is an issue which has been noted by schemes as requiring clarification, and that inspectorates report on, often noting a need for improvement.

Consultation

ICVA has consulted with faith leaders from as many of the main faith groups as possible including Church of England, Islam, Catholic, Jewish and Hindu faiths. Endeavours were made to contact other faith groups. These consultations have all taken place via telephone conversation or face to face, detailing the nature of the guidance required and seeking advice on the best possible practice. All of those consulted agreed that to treat **all** religious items to the standard detailed below would be a model of good practice.

What does the legislation/police guidance say?

PACE at present does not cover this issue specifically however, the Notice of Rights Entitlements given to all detainees under PACE contains the following:

Faith Needs

Tell the police if you need anything to assist you to practise your religion whilst at the station. They can provide religious books and other items, as necessary.

The College of Police produces the Authorised Professional Practice, or APP, which holds further information on detainee rights in terms of religious articles as follows:

Additional provisions in custody

Custody managers should consider providing a separate room for use as a prayer room, or for detainees to receive official visitors such as local faith leaders.

Forces should make arrangements for providing:

- *copies of religious texts*
- *advice to Muslim detainees on the direction of Mecca (eg, a compass or mark applied to the eastern cell wall of one or more cells)*
- *halal, kosher, vegetarian and vegan meal alternatives.*

Custody staff should facilitate any reasonable requests wherever possible.

There is no guidance in terms of how religious items should be stored centrally, although forces may have developed their own guidance on a local level.

What does good practice look like for suites in terms of storage?

- Ensure that if the suite records religion, that the force has looked at this detainee data and has the most used texts available
- Where a text is not available for a particular faith, the suite should have a contact in the community where a text can be sourced, from a local faith group or similar
- Texts from **all faiths** should be stored on a shelf, **at the same level**, with no text stored higher than any other, and no texts from varying faiths on top of one another.
- **All texts should be wrapped**, in clear plastic or similar, (not leather), and handed to the detainee wrapped, (the wrapper can be removed for risk purposes once the detainee has unwrapped the text)
- Texts should be stored in an area for this purpose, and not stored with other items such as shoes, personal property or toiletries of any sort
- Prayer mats should also be stored alongside other religious items and not in piles
- Prayer mats should be wrapped and given to the detainee in this way, (the wrapper can be removed for risk purposes once the detainee has unwrapped the text)

What should ICVs look for?

- Are the texts all stored in the same way?
- Are all texts and prayer mats individually wrapped?
- Does the appearance of how the texts and mats are stored look neat and respectful?