

Case Study

The Home Office
Asian Culture Course

Alison Chapman, with The Home Office, explains how she has benefited from Noble Khan's training:

"Before attending this course, I believed I had a reasonable knowledge of Asian life, customs and religion. When I was presented with the pre-course test however, I was horrified - even ashamed - at how few questions I could answer. It underlined my absolute lack of knowledge!

Taking Noble Khan's training put me right; it was the best, most in-depth course I have ever done and all in one day too. I thought the practical sessions were unique and really effective when compared with having talks on the subjects, as would normally be the case in training.

Now, I know far more and knowing more means I am less likely to offend someone. It also helps me to have an understanding of possible issues that may come up. Noble Khan's booklet has been a tremendous help; apart from my personal reference use, we used it to form a quiz over lunchtime at one of our meetings. I heard a colleague pondering over the questions, saying she was certainly going to learn things when the answers were read out!

I find myself referring to the booklet constantly, perhaps looking at the first names and surnames sections most. I am fascinated to be able to identify Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims by their names. In today's news for instance there is an item about an honour killing in a Sikh family. Their surname was Athwal and when I checked the booklet, the name was there in the section about Sikhs.

Since attending the course I feel much more confident when speaking with Muslim colleagues about religion because I know they believe in God, as I do. Before attending the cultural training course I would not have been sure about this, so would have avoided the subject rather than risk causing offence.

Now I feel confident about speaking with colleagues about their wash procedure before praying. We are going to investigate providing lortas in our toilets and, thanks to the training, I have found conversation around this subject easy, whereas before I would have been reluctant to mention it. In fact, before Noble Khan's training, I would not have known what a lorta was!

Also, I have recently had conversations with colleagues about the Quran and 'zakat,' about not being allowed to gamble and about diet. I feel comfortable having these conversations now and confident about not causing offence. For instance, I would not press a Muslim to join in a lottery syndicate now because I know their religion forbids gambling. This might have been a mistake I would have made before.

I think this course is invaluable, so much so that I have spoken to our Health and Safety Officer about issuing some new guidance to first aiders to ensure hands are washed first in the event of a turban having to be touched and for them to be aware that the Mungal Sutra should only be removed by the wearer herself. This is going to be followed through. In fact, I have just spoken to a Muslim colleague, who is a first aider, about this possible new guidance and she was very enthusiastic. It was good to be able to have a proper discussion with her and ask what other recommendations we could include.



Alison Chapman
The Home Office

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Home Office

Enhancing
YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Enhancing
Cultural
Awareness

**Noble
Khan**