



*The inaugural*

# Waltham Forest Faith & Belief Awards

*Celebrating Local Unsung Heroes*



The  
Faith  
& Belief  
Forum



# WELCOME

The Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum (WFFCF) is delighted, and honoured, to be part of this evening's Faith & Belief Awards ceremony. We were not only asked to be part of the planning team, all of whom worked so very hard to ensure this evening's event will be the most successful ever, but we were also invited to be part of the judging panel. With so many excellent nominees, in so many worthy categories, this was quite a daunting task!

The Faith & Belief Awards is an excellent opportunity to publicly recognise and thank those special individuals who have worked tirelessly, selflessly and with great dedication, often unnoticed, in the background, performing some incredibly important support work, on a voluntary basis, in Waltham Forest. The support which is offered on a daily basis is both varied and humbling. It only happens because of the coming together of like-minded people, from all walks of life, all backgrounds, of all ages and who all want to make a difference. A positive one. If assistance is required - it's there. No questions asked.

All of this evening's nominees and award winners, especially the younger ones, are very special people. They represent a hugely varied and diverse range of groups, organisations and places of worship. Tonight is our opportunity to thank and recognise them, publicly, to shine the spotlight on them, and send a clear message to them - and everyone - that whatever form of work they are doing, whatever form of help and support they are offering - it is very much appreciated.

Thank you for being here to celebrate them, to help make them feel as special as we all know they are. As special as they all prove themselves to be on such a regular basis.

People from the volunteering sector are often called 'Unsung Heroes'. Waltham Forest is lucky to be blessed with more than our fair share of them.

Tonight we are proud to be the 'Choir' singing their praises.

Rev. Paul Braham  
Chair, Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum

# MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

We are truly honoured to host Waltham Forest's first Faith & Belief Awards, giving us the opportunity to celebrate the tremendous contributions of our faith community within the borough.

The awards highlight the diverse array of faith and belief related organisations, who all work tirelessly to encourage social cohesion and bring communities together while simultaneously working to tackle a wide range of social issues.

As Cabinet member representing Jobs, Social Inclusion and Equalities, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the individuals and organisations doing such crucial and exemplary work towards this aim.

**Councillor Vicky Ashworth**  
Cabinet member for Jobs, Social Inclusion and Equalities

The Faith & Belief Forum are delighted to partner with the Waltham Forest Borough Council and the Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum for the inaugural Waltham Forest Faith & Belief Awards. The Faith & Belief Forum have been working for over 25 years on connecting people from all backgrounds, faiths and beliefs to celebrate the power of faith & belief initiatives. We know that people who are inspired by their faiths & beliefs contribute so much, as the work detailed within this brochure shows. But oftentimes, such groups don't shout loudly enough about their work and so can become overlooked and underappreciated in wider society.

We know that by running borough-wide events, we can highlight the invaluable and altruistic work that's happening, while showing that so many religiously-motivated groups, while sharing a faith, are open to all and work for the benefit of their wider communities. The differing categories also show the broad spectrum of work, using people's rich talents for social good.

We hope that you make some wonderful and lasting connections this evening, that the good work continues and is strengthened by linking together likeminded people from across the borough and that new ideas and friendships are formed. Thank you for coming!

**Matthew Gold**  
Programmes Coordinator: London Communities, the Faith & Belief Forum

# PROGRAMME

## Welcome

Councillor Vicky Ashworth

## Remarks on Judging

Bushra Nasir CBE DL, Chair of the Judging Panel

## Awards presentation

## Performance

Farhana Ali

## Awards presentation

## Performance

Community Choir

## Awards presentation

## Thanks

Phil Champion, Director of the Faith and Belief Forum

## Closing

Yvonne Campbell, Head of Communities and Participation, Waltham Forest Council

## Networking and Refreshments



# Finalists

## COST OF LIVING

Working at the neighbourhood level, projects within this category identify people who are often overlooked and excluded. These projects work overtime to connect people to life-saving public services offered by local councils and larger charities, as well as offering advice and support at the community level.

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### Shield of Faith Ministries

Shield of Faith Ministries is a church in Walthamstow that runs a food bank addressing food insecurity in the community, with a particular desire to help those who are facing financial difficulties that prevent them from accessing nutritious food. The food bank collects food donations from community members, local businesses, and its parishioners. The church then sorts and distributes donations to the community.

The food bank is dedicated to alleviating hunger and poverty by fostering a sense of community support by offering essential food items to those who need them the most, improving the overall well-being and quality of life for those in Waltham Forest.

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



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### All Saints Church

All Saints Church provides Highams Park Hub as part of its missionary and community outreach work in North Chingford. The Highams Park Food Aid is open twice weekly and supports approximately 200 people a week. The free Community Café is open on Wednesdays for anyone in the local area to use. The Hub relies on 70 volunteers from the local community, who run the service, collect and issue food, run the café and befriend and support the beneficiaries.

Started during the COVID-19 pandemic, the project now aims to support people holistically and provide a safe and secure place for people to come.

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

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### Community Food Share

The Community Food Share at Holy Trinity and St Augustine of Hippo Church has been running for nearly 5 years and initially began as a food waste initiative to rescue good quality food from landfill and distribute it to those in need. The Community Food Share now offers both non-perishable long-life essentials and perishable rescued food every week to between 50-70 households, including fruit and veg, meat, dairy, nappies and baby supplies and toiletries.

The Community Food Share is more than just food, it isn't a transaction, it's a relationship that aims to support neighbours and community in a holistic way.

[www.e11holy.org.uk/food-share](http://www.e11holy.org.uk/food-share)



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## Cornerstone Baby Bank

The Cornerstone Baby Bank at Cornerstone Church was set up during the pandemic by local parents who recognised the struggles faced by many low-income families. A Baby Bank is similar to a food bank with the aim that the local community can donate new and lightly used baby goods, which are then passed onto local people who need them.

The Baby Bank also provides other baby essentials such as nappies, wipes and at times larger items such as buggies. As the Baby Bank has grown, it is now able to offer ongoing support for parents, drop-in sessions, breast-feeding support and volunteering opportunities.

[www.thecornerstone.org.uk/babybank](http://www.thecornerstone.org.uk/babybank)



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## Islamic Hands

Islamic Hands is the charitable arm of Faizan-e-Islam Mosque, working towards alleviating poverty and suffering among vulnerable communities. The main purpose is to support those in need and to promote social welfare through various initiatives and programs, including a social interaction programme, free funeral service and health and wellbeing events.

The main values of Islamic Hands include compassion, justice, dignity, accountability, and transparency. They strive to provide humanitarian aid to people regardless of their race, religion, or ethnicity, and aim to empower communities through sustainable projects that promote self-sufficiency and economic independence.

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

# Finalists

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

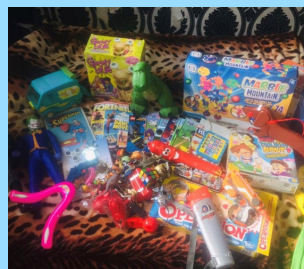
Inspired by The Queen's Green Canopy initiative's mission to encourage environmental sustainability, this category celebrates projects that address one of the most urgent challenges facing humanity by inspiring behavioural change in their communities through education, local campaigns, safeguarding green spaces and taking practical action to tackle climate change.

### Waltham Forest Freebies

Created by Alisha McFarlane in 2012, the Waltham Forest Freebies Facebook group advertises unwanted items for free to avoid them being thrown away in landfill and to ensure that they go to others in the local community. People share all kinds of items for rehoming, including furniture, books, clothes and food. Links to free services within the borough are also regularly shared.

The group isn't just based on giving away an item away, but holds an element of kindness and compassion, which has meant that it has continued to play an important role in serving the local community for over 10 years.

[www.facebook.com/groups/1198136900201699](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1198136900201699)



### Love North Chingford Gardening Group

The Love North Chingford Gardening Group was established in March 2019, in an attempt to make North Chingford a more attractive place to live, work and visit by maintaining the gardens and planters in the local area. The group meets regularly to keep North Chingford looking beautiful, focusing on planting plants for pollinators and plants that are drought tolerant, as well as using Peat Free Compost.

This project has not only improved the local area environment but also inspired the local community to realise the importance of voluntary work to help sustain the green spaces of their local surroundings.

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

### Inconvenient Store

The Inconvenient Store provides a community library, sewing room, garden space and community events space, as well as all kinds of leisure and learning workshops and activities to benefit people's physical and mental health, to promote ethical consumerism as a way to bring the community together, reducing economic and cultural gaps.

They also lead workshops and education sessions around food waste and recycling through craft sessions. The Store creates a space where local people can spend time with other people, make new connections and learn new skills, without having to spend money.

[www.instagram.com/inconveniencestore.uk](https://www.instagram.com/inconveniencestore.uk)



# Finalists

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Projects in this category create specialised services for the health and wellbeing of residents. They improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes for residents, reduce social isolation and improve the quality of life by supporting vulnerable people from different backgrounds.

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### Educate Not Mutilate

Educate Not Mutilate promotes, preserves and protects the physical and mental health of women and girls primarily by tackling the gender-based violence and health inequality that is rooted in female genital mutilation, breast ironing and other forms of gender-based violence.

They deliver educational workshops and promote education and awareness of the issues among school students, teachers, health professionals and the wider public. Since 2022, they have delivered over 120 workshops and educated over 8400 people.

[www.linktr.ee/educatenotmutilate](http://www.linktr.ee/educatenotmutilate)



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### Avengers Cricket Club

The Avengers Cricket Club project at Leyton Cricket Ground and Sir George Monoux College is open to all ages and abilities, creating opportunities and pathways for youngsters and adults to play cricket. The club, led by Head Coach Adnan Choudhry, focuses on connecting communities through cricket, as well as engaging the club community with other healthy activities like walks and Colts cricket, to make the Borough more active, healthy, and fit.

The ultimate aim of the project is to produce the next player for the England team!

[www.aca.london/avengers-cricket-club](http://www.aca.london/avengers-cricket-club)

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### Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelter

Churches in Waltham Forest have consistently served the homeless community in the borough over many years. Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelter (FCENS) began in 2009 as a response to rough sleeping in winter months.

The community has served in faith to provide shelter every winter from November to March, including through the COVID-19 pandemic. FCENS now has an all-year drop-in and an emergency shelter at YMCA, where church volunteers serve an evening meal for shelter guests.

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



# Finalists

## INSPIRING YOUTH

Young people from minority backgrounds are often overlooked and may be excluded from civic life. Projects within this category work with young people to encourage leadership and participation in their local community and connect them with opportunities beyond their neighbourhoods.

### Genesis Education Trust

The Genesis Education Trust is comprised of two Church of England Primary Schools in Walthamstow with a passion and desire to see all communities and children thrive. Over the last two years, the schools have run a refugees and displacement programme, including cultural fun days for local refugee families, volunteering opportunities and a £15,000 fundraising campaign to rehouse a local refugee family. The trust is now accredited as a School of Sanctuary, through City of Sanctuary UK.

The programme seeks to educate the students on refugees and displacement, and to build a community based on tolerance, knowledge and kindness.

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



### Salaam Peace

Salaam Peace is a community engagement programme that uses sports and social education to bring people together from diverse backgrounds, founded in the aftermath of the 7/7 bombings due to the negative media attention surrounding British Muslims.

Operating in Waltham Forest, Hackney, Haringey and Newham, Salaam Peace focuses on promoting physical and mental wellbeing, social belonging, educational attainment, employability skills and opportunities for local people. They adopt a youth leadership and lived experience model in their work to ensure that their work continues to focus on current and local issues.

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



# Finalists

## INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Local neighbourhoods are multi-faith spaces where people with different faiths and beliefs share the same public spaces and services. Projects within this category build bridges across communities and create hubs that are open to all.

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### Eden Girls Waltham Forest

At Eden Girls Waltham Forest, staff and students are involved in a range of interfaith, charity and civic community projects. The school works very closely with the Faith and Belief Forum and takes part in the annual school interfaith linking project.

In addition, staff and students organise an annual Interfaith Breakfast, attended by more than 60 guests representing a variety of faith traditions. The school has hosted special visits for the Archbishop of York, the Chief Rabbi of the UK and the Mayor of Waltham Forest.

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



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### Fatima Qasmi

Fatima is a volunteer interfaith community chaplain and faith leader who has dedicated herself to serving others. She offers pastoral, religious and spiritual care for people of faith or none in a variety of different settings, including care homes, hospices and hospitals. She also works with young people to build their confidence and empower them. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Fatima managed a homeless project in Waltham Forest and continues to support the homeless in temporary accommodation.

Fatima has been described as an excellent leader, who is humble yet passionate about helping others and making a difference.

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### Forest Women's Interfaith Network

Forest Women's Interfaith Network (WIN), affiliated to the national Women's Interfaith Network, was set up 14 years ago to promote unity through diversity in our multifaith/ multicultural borough and surrounding areas. With a membership reflecting the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities, the annual programme includes a faith pilgrimage, interfaith fayre, events during national interfaith week and festivals, devotionals, meetings and social action projects.

Forest WIN's work continues to build friendships, trust and respect across all faiths and none through activities enabling community cohesion, inclusivity, understanding and development

[www.facebook.com/ForestWIN](https://www.facebook.com/ForestWIN)



# Finalists

## PROMOTING INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Residents may face misunderstanding, isolation or exclusion because of their faith or belief. They may be further excluded, due to other aspects of their identities (e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age and ability) – and this discrimination may take place within faith groups or wider society. Projects within this category work at the intersection between faith/belief and other aspects of identity – creating inclusive spaces.

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### Afro-Caribbean Elders Association

The Afro-Caribbean Elders Association (ACEA) is an inclusive voluntary organisation whose membership consists largely of the Afro-Caribbean community within Waltham Forest and the surrounding areas. ACEA works with other community groups and local agencies to provide weekly cultural, social, health, educational, crafts and recreational activities. Activities include arts and crafts, keep-fit sessions, a singing group, cultural trips out and events during Black History Month.

ACEA also aims to bridge the gap between the older generation and the young, creating more intergenerational connections and giving younger people the opportunity to learn about the history of the Caribbean community.



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### Soul Food Community Meal

Soul Food Community Meal was started by St Andrew's Church, Upper Leytonstone and Leytonstone Mutual Aid in 2022, but has evolved and is now run by the community, for the community. Volunteers prepare and serve a free three-course meal for all in the community, in a warm, friendly, safe space.

The meal provides a space for people of all faiths and beliefs and ages to get to know their neighbours and to feel a sense of belonging in the local community. Photo kindly provided by the Warm Welcome Campaign.

[www.facebook.com/StAndrewsE11](https://www.facebook.com/StAndrewsE11)

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## The Togetherness Café

The Togetherness Café is a community initiative led by Blossom that aims to create safe, inclusive spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together to foster unity, understanding, and a sense of belonging. The café provides a welcoming environment where people of all faiths, beliefs, and cultures can connect, share their experiences, and support one another.

Through a commitment to inclusivity and the power of genuine human connection, the café aspires to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and build bridges within the community.

[www.blossom.place/the-togetherness-cafe-where-everyone-belongs/](http://www.blossom.place/the-togetherness-cafe-where-everyone-belongs/)



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## St Barnabas and St James the Greater Welcomes All

St Barnabas and St James the Greater Welcomes All (SBWA) is a community outreach project that collaborates with community partners to deliver activities for all people in the community, regardless of faith, or non-religious belief. Programmes include supporting migrants with advocacy work and English lessons, supporting the elderly, a community choir and an environmental committee.

All activities are co-designed and led by volunteers with lived experience, including migrants, people of colour, women, elderly, youth and LGBTQ+.

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



# Finalists

## SKILLS JOBS AND LIFELONG LEARNING

In many parts of the world, it is faith groups that lead the way in terms of addressing structural inequality through skills training. Importantly, this is not just for Youth, as it's important for social mobility at all ages and key for our 50+ residents and those with a disability who we know from the data, are disadvantaged in the workplace.

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### Geek Café

The Geek Café, located on the Leytonstone high street, offers basic PC classes for adults who struggle using computers, including how to use online services including, emails, online banking and how to access benefits and council services. Abdul Sayed, Manager of the cafe, runs the classes, along with one-on-one sessions for those who need additional support. Abdul has also initiated an afternoon tea, open to all who are lonely and need someone to talk to.

[www.facebook.com/geekcafeuk](https://www.facebook.com/geekcafeuk)



# Finalists

## SUPPORTING WOMEN AND GIRLS

Women, from all walks of life, make extraordinary contributions to their communities and the city we live in, but they're not always recognised. This category will recognise the work of projects which support women to make change in their community through providing education, advocacy, friendship and a wider array of services.

### Kiran Support Services

Kiran Support Services provides intersectional, culturally sensitive support for South Asian women and children fleeing domestic abuse and harmful practices, including forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence. Established in 1990, Kiran supports 400 women in Waltham Forest annually, through the provision of refuge accommodation, specialist counselling including play therapy for children, immigration advice and casework support.

Kiran provides activities on demand and is a service user-led organisation: It is run by and for Asian women to meet the needs of the local community.

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



### Julie Pell

Julie is the Church Co-Leader of Walthamstow Salvation Army Community Church. As part of her role, Julie organises preschool groups for mums in the local community and oversees a Community Resource Hub that provides support for vulnerable families. She seeks to ensure that the church is a safe space, where support can be received, community can be found, and all are welcome.

Julie has been described as someone with great heart and enthusiasm.

### Refuge

Refuge provides confidential, non-judgmental support to those in Waltham Forest who are experiencing gender-based violence. The service provides emergency accommodation, in-house support, training and referrals to survivors of domestic abuse. Refuge supports women from different religious backgrounds and caters to individual needs, considering the service users' cultural backgrounds.

Refuge also prioritises helping women to create connections and make new friends, to help them recover and start their new lives.

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



# CREDITS

The Waltham Forest Faith & Belief Awards would not have been possible without the continued support and guidance of the planning committee. Particular thanks must be given to Cllr. Vicky Ashworth, Yvonne Campbell and Mariel Kirton from Waltham Forest Council, Paul Braham from the Waltham Forest Faith & Communities Forum, and to Bushra Nasir CBE DL. Thank you also to Jessica Hazrati, Danny Hibbs-Woodings and Ines Belo for their support earlier during this process.

Thank you to the Judging Panel: Paul Braham, Steve Barnabis, Tara Khare, Saira Begum, Rev. Dan Gates and Young Advisor Tori Allison-Powell; and to Bushra Nasir CBE DL who expertly chaired the Judging Panel.

Thank you to Waltham Forest Community Choir and Farhana Ali for your wonderful performances and to the Waltham Forest Council team and Fellowship Square for your hospitality.

Finally, we are grateful for the support of His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London's Faith Council.

# SPONSORS

We would like to thank our sponsors of tonight for their generous contributions.

Thank you to Dangoor Education and the City Bridge Trust for generously sponsoring the event.

# STAY IN TOUCH



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