

# FAITH, BELIEF AND INCLUSION

Jonathan D Smith, Lenita Törning,  
Ben Gidley and Ruth Sheldon



**The  
Faith  
& Belief  
Forum**

Formerly 3FF (Three Faiths Forum)





## About the series

This briefing paper is one of a series on faith, belief and belonging in London. The papers are published jointly by The Faith & Belief Forum (formerly 3FF) and the Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. Our thanks to all the roundtable participants whose input enriched these papers, and to Dangoor Education for the grant which makes this series possible.

## About the authors

**The Faith & Belief Forum** (formerly 3FF) has worked tirelessly for over 20 years to build good relations between people of all faiths and beliefs, and to create a society where difference is celebrated. We create spaces in schools, universities, workplaces and the wider community where people can engage with questions of belief and identity and meet people different from themselves. Enabling people to learn from each other in this way is often the most effective way to tackle ignorance and challenge stereotypes – and create understanding and trust between people. For more information, see [faithbeliefforum.org](http://faithbeliefforum.org).

**The Department of Psychosocial Studies**, Birkbeck, University of London (BDPS) was founded in 2000 and aims to investigate a wide range of contemporary social, political and personal concerns. The Department is unique in its interdisciplinary focus and draws together academics and clinicians from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds to think together about the relation between social and psychic life. For more information, see [bbk.ac.uk/psychosocial/about-us](http://bbk.ac.uk/psychosocial/about-us). Briefings on Faith, Belief and Belonging are supported by a grant from Dangoor Education ([dangooreducation.com](http://dangooreducation.com)).

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## For further information please contact

F&BF  
Star House  
104 Grafton Road,  
London NW5 4BA  
United Kingdom

[faithbeliefforum.org](http://faithbeliefforum.org)  
[info@faithbeliefforum.org.uk](mailto:info@faithbeliefforum.org.uk)  
+44 (0) 207 482 9549

# INTRODUCTION



**As human beings we want to bring our whole selves into our families, our neighbourhoods, our places of work and our public spaces.**

*This briefing paper is one of a series on faith, belief and belonging in London. In May and June 2018, The Faith & Belief Forum and the Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck, University of London hosted a series of roundtables about barriers to belonging for Londoners from different faiths and beliefs. The roundtables brought together local organisations, academics and policy experts 1) to understand better the issues and their impact on local communities, and 2) to share good practice for local initiatives working for social inclusion and belonging. The presentations in the roundtables were shared as podcasts on the Faith & Belief Forum website.<sup>1</sup> The comments and discussion of the roundtables have informed this series.*

On 12 June 2018, 25 local organisations, academics and policy experts gathered to discuss factors for exclusion for Londoners from different faiths and beliefs, and to share good practice on inclusion. The discussion on the day addressed important questions about faith, belief and identity:

- How does a person's faith and belief identity overlap and meet other aspects of identity?
- In what ways can people with a strong or visible faith and belief identity be excluded or marginalised due to their other identities?
- Are there any challenges and/or tensions faced by including people with different intersections of identities?
- What or who tends to be excluded when we talk about including people from different faith and belief backgrounds?
- What does it mean to be included as a person of faith?
- What does it mean to be included as a person of faith and other identities?

The roundtable included presentations from academics and community organisations, including projects recognised by the London Faith & Belief Community Awards.<sup>1</sup> In this paper their comments will be referenced by mentioning their full names. Audio of the presentations from the roundtable can be accessed on the Faith & Belief Forum website.<sup>1</sup>

Presenters at the roundtable and respondents who are mentioned in this paper include:

- Alison Jones, Community Cohesion Coordinator, and Rumana Begum, Parental Support Worker, Marion Richardson Primary School
- Chanel Noel, Education and Learning Manager, The Faith & Belief Forum

- Jagbir Jhutti-Johal, Senior Lecturer in Sikh Studies, University of Birmingham
- Joanne McCrone, Refugee Response Coordinator, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Department, Diocese of Southwark
- Line Nyhagen, Reader in Sociology, Loughborough University
- Naomi Thompson, Lecturer in Youth and Community Work, Goldsmiths, University of London
- Siobhán Anderson, Programmes Coordinator, The Faith & Belief Forum
- Tamanda Walker, PhD Researcher, University of Leeds
- William Ackah, Lecturer in Community and Voluntary Sector Studies, Birkbeck, University of London

In this paper we discuss the concept of belonging (see ***What is belonging?***) and how it relates to inclusion and exclusion. Belonging involves all aspects of who we are, and we are complex human beings with differences in many aspects: religion and belief, as well as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, ability and many others. It also touches on the emotional aspects of being part of social contexts and groups, and the need for us to feel that we belong somewhere. As human beings we want to bring our whole selves into our families, our neighbourhoods, our places of work and our public spaces.

At times these groups and spaces do not welcome us fully, either by intentional design or through a lack of understanding, creativity or flexibility. When part of ourselves is excluded, it dampens our sense of belonging and limits our potential to contribute to society. Londoners from different faiths and beliefs may face exclusion due to other aspects of their identities. Inclusion happens as groups and institutions change in order to welcome difference, and to actively support people to be themselves fully. The paper includes case studies of local groups working for inclusion in ways that connect our multiple aspects of identity.

## What is belonging?<sup>2</sup>



Belonging is where 'being' meets 'longing'. We want to be fully ourselves and we want to be accepted by others

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Belonging affects everyone. Whether we were born in London or arrived yesterday, we all struggle to belong.

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Our sense of belonging is changing. We as human beings are changing and our world is changing around us. In London neighbourhoods change as many people move in and out, and our society changes as technology and the environment changes.

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We belong to many places and groups at once. We belong to locations, like a nation, a city or a neighbourhood and we may belong to many different groups at once in our professional and social lives.

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Our sense of belonging works on multiple levels. Feeling welcome in our community can affect how we feel about our city or our country. A message that we are not welcome from one person can affect how we feel accepted in our city.

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Our sense of belonging may not match others' ideas about us. We may feel that we belong, but other people may tell us that we do not belong. People may look at us and assume that we belong, but we may feel isolated and unwelcome.

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Our sense of belonging is affected by systems as well as people. Deprivation and discrimination have important influences. If we do not have equal access to services which others do, our sense of belonging is limited.

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We all decide who belongs, but some people have more power to extend belonging than others. In groups the power to decide who belongs is shared between members, yet often a few people have the most power to include or exclude.

# UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY, EXCLUSION AND BELONGING





Our identities and belonging are fundamental to who we are and become – and they are closely connected. Our identities tell the story about who we are and what we identify with, and belonging is where this identification becomes meaningful. To belong somewhere is not only about *being* part of something, it also involves *feeling* part of something and identifying with the social contexts – whether it is one's family, religious community, work place, city or country. It is through belonging that our identities are formed and given meaning. Most of us consider belonging *to somewhere* and *to some people* to be a crucial part of our ability to live successful and engaged lives. These spaces make us feel included and accepted, and they also come with sets of meanings, symbols and affective structures that impact how they are experienced, understood and acted upon. Our identities and belonging(s) are therefore relational; they are both the result of a process we experience (how we identify with something) and the social spaces of which we are part.<sup>3</sup>

But there are also times when we are not allowed to be who we are.

Most of us belong to several different groups and social contexts – we

**We might face or fear the risk of being excluded because of one or several of our identities and therefore hide important parts of us or not have a choice but to do so.**

have multiple identities that intersect or connect in different ways – and these are sometimes not compatible. Sometimes we are faced with difficult moments when we must choose between different identities to avoid conflict or tension. For example, we might face or fear the risk of being excluded because of one or several of our

identities and therefore hide important parts of us or not have a choice but to do so. This section looks at how exclusion can affect people with different faith and belief identities, and the social and emotional consequences this may have on feelings of belonging. It also aims to provide a background to the next section that focuses on inclusion.



### **How do faith and belief relate to belonging?**

We use the term ‘faith and belief’ as an aspect of people’s identity, including all religious and non-religious beliefs.<sup>4</sup> Most scholars agree that faith and belief may contribute to both belonging and exclusion.<sup>5</sup> For many Londoners, their faith or belief provides a sense of belonging and is a source of wellbeing. At times local faith and belief groups may contribute to exclusion and social division, yet people motivated by their diverse faiths and beliefs also make important contributions to creating a sense of belonging for their neighbours.

Research by the Faith & Belief Forum has identified four ways that local faith and belief groups extend and enhance a sense of belonging to Londoners of all faiths and beliefs.<sup>6</sup> These groups improve access for isolated people to life-enhancing services. They alleviate deprivation by opening pathways to employment and housing, and by addressing the causes of poverty. They reduce social tension by connecting neighbours from different backgrounds. They extend a warm welcome to people arriving from other parts of the UK and from other countries.

## What does ‘multiple identities’ mean?

Having multiple identities means that we belong to many different groups and social spaces. Our many identities include the family we are born into, the group of friends we have, the school we attended, the workplace we are employed by, the religious and ethnic groups we belong to, the country we are born in (or are perceived to belong to), our gender identity, sexual and romantic orientations, age, mental and physical health, and the city we are living in (see *London identity*). In some cases, we are actively identifying with (at least some of) these

groups and we consider our membership in these groups as important. In other cases, we are ‘perceived’ to belong to these groups by others because of the way we look or act.

**William Ackah gave the example of how some white public officials speak freely about a wide range of topics, whereas black public officials more often are only invited to speak about issues in relation to race.**

The terms ‘intersectionality’ and ‘intersected’ identities are often used to look at how our many identities are experienced, lived and affect us as

individuals.<sup>7</sup> For some people, having many identities might not be problematic. They can actively enter different social spaces with little difficulty and are not questioned whether they belong there or not. But, for others, their multiple identities might make them more vulnerable for discrimination and exclusion. In the roundtable William Ackah gave the example of how some white public officials speak freely about a wide range of topics, whereas black and minority ethnic public officials more often are only invited to speak about issues in relation to race. This limiting of participation can create feelings of exclusion, but it can also open new alliances and areas for interaction, which will be discussed in the next section on inclusion.



### London identity

London is a diverse city with people from every part of the world living side by side. Could people's identification with London be more inclusive than an English or British identity? A 2018 study on London identity by the Centre for London found that Londoners' strong identification with the city has stayed the same even as London has become more diverse.<sup>8</sup> Yet people define being a Londoner in different ways, 'from landmarks to experiences, to a celebration of the city's cosmopolitanism itself'. In the roundtable we discussed London identity and how that fits with inclusion. Some participants suggested that for minority groups living in London they are sometimes able to bring more of their identities into public spaces.

The idea of London as an inclusive place has also been celebrated publicly by all three London mayors, including the current mayor, Sadiq Khan, who is a native Londoner and a South Asian Muslim. Others pointed out that because the London identity is not well-defined, it can also easily change in ways that are less inclusive. Naomi Thompson found in her research with London Muslim university students that the election of a Muslim as

mayor affected their sense of belonging in negative ways as well as positive. The visible symbol of a Muslim mayor demonstrates that Muslims can have a place in public life, but the mayoral campaign included false accusations of Muslim extremism against Sadiq Khan. For some students, this communicated that Muslims will be treated with suspicion even if they want to be involved in civic life. The study on London identity concluded that the strength of the London identity is in its broad definition, allowing people to feel a sense of belonging without making the definition so limited as to exclude others.

### Understanding exclusion

Exclusion happens when a person or a group is limited from full participation in society. This exclusion can both be *physical* (e.g. being socially isolated) and *emotional* (e.g. not feeling wanted or being rejected) and can be experienced in many ways: from bullying and ostracism (not feeling wanted) to discrimination, stigmatisation and in some cases even dehumanisation.<sup>9</sup> Exclusion can range from extreme cases (e.g. removal of citizenship and hate crimes) to everyday experiences of discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

In all its forms exclusion creates the feeling of 'being different' and not being accepted because of this difference. For some people, this might happen when they enter into public spaces (e.g. school or workplace) where they are perceived as different from other people. For others, it can mean hiding important identities because of the fear of being excluded by a group they feel strongly connected to. In the roundtable Naomi Thompson mentioned how some young Christians who identified as LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and other gender identities and sexual and romantic orientations) actively hid their sexuality when they were in church because of fear that they would be excluded if their sexuality became known. Line Nyhagen gave two other examples from her research about lived citizenship for Christian and Muslim women in the UK.<sup>11</sup> The Christian (and mostly white) women described how their gender identities became visible in their church work and prevented

them from becoming fully involved. The Muslim women experienced this exclusion more in wider society than in their mosques. Some considered gender segregation in mosques to be positive because it provided them with opportunities for participation and belonging whilst societal barriers in wider society (e.g., discrimination and stereotyping) prevented them from fully participating as British citizens.

Not all exclusion is imposed by those in power. In some cases, groups might isolate themselves to maintain their distinctiveness and 'protect' their identities. Some local faith groups have concerns that mixing with other groups could challenge and even endanger their way of life. Sometimes minority groups create spaces where they can be protected from discrimination in wider society. Roundtable participants shared that this voluntary exclusion can increase a sense of belonging for people facing discrimination – yet this exclusion also results in missing out important voices in the public conversation on who belongs.

William Ackah mentioned two groups that tend not to be involved in public conversations on inclusion such as our roundtable. One group is those who are most marginalised and who might not have the resources and access to participate in these forums. Another group is those who are powerful (e.g. leaders and policy makers) and do not feel that they have anything to contribute to these issues since they are not directly affected by them. But, as William stressed, it is important that those in power also participate in conversations about inclusion, as this process exposes their own identities and biases.



### Impact of exclusion on belonging

Social exclusion has a profound social and emotional impact on people. Long-term exclusion can cause social and political withdrawal and have lasting impact on relationships, mental well-being and trust. It can also lead to questioning one's belonging and to isolation from society.<sup>12</sup>

In the roundtable, several examples were given of how this exclusion might affect people from different faiths and beliefs. In some cases, the exclusion might come from the faith communities and congregations themselves, which can cause frustration and withdrawal from the group. Naomi Thompson gave two examples of young Christians and how their age and ethnicity might exclude them. Some young Christians who are active in their churches expressed frustration of not being included in the decision-making in their local church and felt older people did not take their ideas seriously. This created feelings of not being wanted and valued. Another example was how ethnicity and cultural barriers can impact our sense of belonging and feelings of exclusion. Naomi Thompson described how one of her research participants had been very involved in the Catholic church in his home country in Africa and had formed very strong attachment to this faith community. But when he came to the UK after being adopted by a Catholic nun, he felt excluded and could not settle in his new church, which he described as very white and lacking the social feeling of his home church.

The experience of exclusion can also result in creating new spaces which are themselves exclusive. In the roundtable, William Ackah mentioned how some religious spaces can help minority groups to escape racism and discrimination, but they can sometimes leave little room for counter-arguments and diversity (see ***The complicated challenge of exclusion***). The next section will discuss how inclusive spaces also can be exclusive in some cases.

### **The complicated challenge of exclusion**

Why are some faith groups associated with LGBT+ and gender discrimination? This complicated question was discussed by roundtable participants. It can be difficult to understand why people who are victims of discrimination sometimes discriminate against others within their communities. William Ackah gave an explanation from his research and experience in African and Caribbean churches in London. These institutions were established partly as spaces where people could be free from racial prejudice and discrimination. By ordering local institutions around a shared identity, they may downplay disagreement and overlook other identities which might be seen to create difference and discord within the community. This might have direct impact on issues in relation to gender, sexuality and other ideas that do not fit with that culture, which could end up excluding people who might identify with any of these identity categories. This example highlights how inclusion works on multiple levels. It is possible for any institution to be highly inclusive on one aspect of identity, and to be exclusionary on another aspect.



## Summary

As we have seen in this section, most of us belong to many social spaces and these are important in telling the story of who we are. But there might be situations when we are excluded based on one or several of our identities, which might have social and emotional consequences that can result in isolation and withdrawal. These examples of exclusion highlight the need to develop spaces into which people feel they can bring ‘their whole selves’ and where diversity and differences are accepted. In the next section, we will look at how such inclusive spaces are formed and experienced.



# **CREATING INCLUSIVE SPACES: WHAT, WHERE, WHO AND HOW**



In the last section we discussed why inclusion matters by looking at the negative impact of exclusion on people from different faiths and beliefs in London. In this section we will share insights from roundtable participants about creating inclusive spaces: what, who, where, and how.

### What are inclusive spaces?

Exclusion is complex and works on many levels. In order to address exclusion in our institutions and communities, people working together can create and hold inclusive spaces. William Ackah describes an

**William Ackah describes an inclusive space as one which welcomes the whole person, where people can be themselves authentically and bring all aspects of their identity into the space.**

inclusive space as one which welcomes the whole person, where people can be themselves authentically and bring all aspects of their identity into the space. Each person is a unique individual, so an inclusive space will treat them as such, not as the representative of a group. Yet each person is a member of many groups and has many identities, so an

inclusive space recognises each person as having many identities. An inclusive space is actively welcoming, where people work to understand and to accommodate others' needs and realise their full potential. It is sensitive to how people have been excluded, and it works to remove those barriers and change systems in a just and fair way.



### Is a fully inclusive space possible?

A major misconception about inclusive spaces is that every space should be (or can be) completely inclusive. Sometimes spaces which are organised to support one group will not be as inclusive to other groups. For example, people who are Sikhs may feel a stronger sense of belonging in a gurdwara than non-Sikhs, because the gurdwara has been designed to support people from the Sikh faith. These spaces can still be welcoming to people from other faiths or beliefs (gurdwaras are famous for their hospitality) without losing their primary design to support one group identity. In some cases, limiting spaces to certain groups may increase belonging for people who have been excluded from other groups. The need for these limited spaces is particularly important for groups which face discrimination and marginalisation in wider society. For example, groups designed to support women's advancement in the workplace will not be as inclusive to men. A healthy society will design a variety of spaces so that everyone can find places where they belong.

## Where are inclusive spaces created?

Roundtable participants discussed three distinct places where inclusive spaces can be created: local faith groups, public spaces, and middle spaces.

**Local faith groups:** London has thousands of local places of worship, and many of these run projects to improve the lives of their members and others in the local community. In research she conducted alongside Graham Bright, Peter Hart and Bethany Hayden, Naomi Thompson describes two ways that these groups work for inclusion.<sup>13</sup> They create ‘inclusion within’ by making space for gender, sexuality, disability and other aspects of identity – partly through education and partly through advocacy. In so doing they increase the numbers of women and young people in leadership roles, adapt spaces to include people with disabilities, and help people to reconcile their faith with their sexuality.

**Local faith groups create ‘inclusion within’ by making space for gender, sexuality, disability and other aspects of identity – partly through education and partly through advocacy.**

These groups also create ‘inclusion without’ by actively welcoming people who are not from the same faith background – reaching out to help people who are excluded in wider society through food banks, night shelters, legal

advice centres, youth and childcare programmes. Notable examples of these inclusive projects can be found in the London Faith & Belief Community Awards.<sup>14</sup>

**Public spaces:** Another key location for inclusion is the area of public spaces. Places of work, government and civic life tend to be secular and can struggle to welcome people with a strong or visible religious identity. These public spaces become more inclusive

by accommodating religious practice in public through practical means such as providing prayer spaces and accommodating food requirements. Many businesses include working groups on religion and belief to set better policies – and educate those who set policy – on understanding religious practice. Other inclusive laws and policies also benefit people from faith backgrounds, such as gender equality in salaries and accommodating childcare and flexible working. Also useful is public education about ‘lived religion’, which can be different from religious dogma.<sup>15</sup> This education enables public spaces to welcome each person as an individual with a religious identity rather than fit them into inaccurate stereotypes about entire religious groups. In so doing we can create spaces where people can be more fully themselves.

**Education about ‘lived religion’ enables public spaces to welcome human beings with a religious identity rather than fit them into inaccurate stereotypes.**

### **Case study: English for inclusion**

Speaking English is a key marker of inclusion, as those who struggle to communicate in English sometimes have limited access to services and relational connections with their communities. Effective projects for inclusion often adapt English teaching as a means for building community. In the roundtable, Joanne McCrone shared about a project at **St. Margaret’s Church**, Lewisham, which provides English classes using 40 local volunteers and 60 learners (mostly asylum seekers and refugees) from 16 countries and many faith backgrounds. The flexible, relational approach lets learners set their own language goals and matches volunteers with skills to support them. One creative outcome was two Afghani participants learning how to drive and passing their driving test. **Creative English**, a project of **Faith Action**, uses a drama-based methodology to English instruction, where participants create and act out stories of their lives using words and actions. This creative approach enables people from different levels of English to feel part of a

group. It also allows the group to explore differences in how they respond to situations and link it with their faith and other identities. Acting out lives enables people to understand others' stories, and for people to better understand their differences in a safe space.



**Middle spaces:** A third place in which inclusive spaces are created are what roundtable participants called 'middle spaces' – places in between public spaces and local faith groups. William Ackah described how people who could be marginalised in a religious group (such as people with faith and LGBT identities) can find other allies and resources to advocate for their inclusion and to challenge exclusionary views. Jagbir Jhutti-Johal and Naomi Thompson both gave examples of British Sikh young people who were excluded from leadership roles in local gurdwaras. They decided to reach out into wider society through activities such as setting up public *langars* (hospitality tents) and representing Sikhs in the media. By working in this middle space, they were able to take greater leadership in their community and broaden the representation of Sikhs.

## Who creates inclusive spaces?

Roundtable participants noted that some people play crucial parts in making spaces more inclusive.

- Brokers bring together and connect people who are excluded with those who are more powerful, and they connect groups who might be isolated with other groups sharing similar struggles.
- Facilitators help people to listen to each other, to understand the hurt caused by exclusion and to better understand how to make institutions more inclusive.
- Advocates use their power to champion inclusion where they have influence: on boards, religious committees, local councils and other places. They also support public campaigns to challenge policies and structures which exclude.

Everyone can work for inclusion, but some people have more power

**Chanel Noel pointed out that the burden of responsibility to create inclusive spaces should rest on those in power, rather than expecting excluded groups to try to fit themselves in.**

and resources available for this work than others. Chanel Noel pointed out that the burden of responsibility to create inclusive spaces should rest on those in power, rather than expecting excluded groups to try to fit themselves in. Some noted from personal experience that they cannot

include themselves where they are not wanted, or when people in power cannot acknowledge their role in excluding people. Thus, it is crucial for those who hold power – political and religious leaders, policymakers, trustees and shareholders of companies and charities – to actively learn about and encounter people from minority groups who are excluded. This process of encounter should spark a desire to challenge and change policies and structures which exclude.





### Case study: Faith and LGBT+

A number of excellent projects are working for inclusion in the middle space between local faith groups and LGBT+ support groups in London. Some of these are grassroots initiatives working for inclusion within faith groups. **Oasis Waterloo** runs a weekly group for Christians with LGBT+ identities, as well as a network of churches welcoming LGBT+ people. **House of Rainbow** was setup by a Nigerian Pentecostal pastor based in East London to help minority groups who tend to be excluded by LGBT+ groups and by local faith groups. There are similar projects that work specifically with LGBT+ Muslims (**Imaan** and **London Queer Muslims**), Jewish communities (**KeshetUK**) and Sikh communities (**SARBAT**). Other projects work to make LGBT+ organisations more inclusive to people from faith backgrounds. The LGBT+ Faith project at the **Faith & Belief Forum** works with 90 LGBT organisations in the UK (many in London), ranging from larger charities such as Stonewall to smaller community support groups. The project addresses barriers that people of faith may face when they try to access those services, such as the misconception that you cannot be a person of faith and LGBT+. According to research by Shanon Shah, these projects help people to gain a sense of community from both their faith group and their LGBT+ group.<sup>16</sup>

## How are inclusive spaces created?

Creating inclusive spaces is more an art than a science, requiring creativity and persistence. Tools which work in one space will not necessarily work in another. Roundtable participants shared multiple examples of how inclusive spaces are being created in local and public institutions.

- Educating about other faiths and beliefs in schools, colleges, universities and communities. There are many effective projects which link faith schools, educate students about different faiths and beliefs, and which connect faith groups to each other.
- Educating for inclusion within faith groups. People and projects who provide spaces for people to explore faith in a safe space, helping them to understand how their faith fits with other aspects of their identity (see ***Faith and LGBT+*** and ***English for inclusion***). Naomi Thompson shared multiple examples in her research with youth workers.<sup>12</sup>
- Facilitating encounters with faith by exposing people from majority groups to minority groups through dialogue and encounter: Line Nyhagen shared examples of facilitating visits of her students to local places of worship to meet religious leaders and understand how they practise their faith in the community.
- Partnerships between local faith groups and voluntary groups which offer specialised support: Local councils and voluntary infrastructure organisations often act as brokers between faith groups and other organisations to provide support for inclusive activities and they offer training and support where needed. An example was shared of this work by Hackney local council.
- Equality assessments and campaigns: Making assessment for how well an institution is inclusive, including religious literacy and how it links with other equality and diversity campaigns (see ***Inclusion in the workplace***).

- Bringing faith groups with schools, unions, voluntary groups together for common causes. The work of organisations such as Citizens UK, which pioneered the London Living Wage, demonstrates the power of such coalitions to address exclusion in society. In the process of advocacy, people learn about each other and develop more understanding and sense of shared belonging.

In addition to these examples, three case studies have been included throughout this section on **creating inclusive spaces**. Each case study provides practical examples of organisations and individuals working for inclusion in creative and effective ways.

### **Case study: Inclusion in the workplace through interfaith staff networks**

In order to make workplaces more inclusive to people from different faiths and beliefs, some companies have established staff networks to increase religious literacy.<sup>17</sup> Tamanda Walker shared the example of one of these organisations, **EY** in the UK.<sup>18</sup> EY has an interfaith working group which includes EY staff networks for five religious groups. Each faith group network organises its own events to create better understanding about their faith – such as a Question Time event in July 2018 organised by the Hindu staff network and attended by EY staff and members of the public. The faith networks address issues which affect people of faith, as well as connect with other areas of diversity such as gender and ethnicity. These networks are led by staff members, but their effectiveness depends on strong support from a Diversity & Inclusion Manager who is an advocate for improving the religious literacy of the company. These initiatives provide space for reflection and action which can make workspaces more welcoming and open to people from different faiths and beliefs.

# CONCLUSION



In this paper many voices have shared thoughts about the challenges of exclusion and examples of inspiring work for inclusion for Londoners of all faiths and beliefs. This section sums up the briefing paper with a challenging reflection about the attitude of inclusion.

In the roundtable, participants suggested that a crucial element to create inclusive spaces is an attitude of inclusion. The attitude of inclusion looks like the picture on the cover of this report, with a sign reading ‘Yes, we are

open’ – a radical openness full of creativity and humility. This attitude requires an acceptance of being uncomfortable, as exclusion is challenged in ourselves and in our institutions. The challenge to be more inclusive is constant: being inclusive in one area does not mean that we will be inclusive in other areas.

**The attitude of inclusion requires an acceptance of being uncomfortable, as exclusion is challenged in ourselves and in our institutions. The challenge to be more inclusive is constant: being inclusive in one area does not mean that we will be inclusive in other areas.**

During the roundtable Joanne McCrone described the path to inclusion as a long journey. It is not a race that we can quickly run and then comfortably rest on our past

achievements. On the journey toward inclusion we need to look back and celebrate how far we have come. We also need to acknowledge how far we have yet to go.

The journey toward inclusion in London has come a long way, and we have much to celebrate about London as a city which hosts people from all backgrounds. Yet there are many people who are excluded every day due to their age, religion, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and in many other ways – there is a long journey yet to go.

This paper has demonstrated numerous examples of how Londoners can participate in the journey toward inclusion. Within our own institutions, places of work, local communities, we can be brokers, facilitators and advocates for inclusion. By sharing positive examples of inclusion, we can inspire others and challenge ourselves to continue the difficult and necessary work to make London a place where everyone belongs fully.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For the roundtable podcast, see [faithbeliefforum.org/podcast-roundtable-on-faith-belief-and-inclusion-in-london/](http://faithbeliefforum.org/podcast-roundtable-on-faith-belief-and-inclusion-in-london/). Information on the London Faith & Belief Community Awards can be found at [faithbeliefforum.org/programme/london-faith-belief-community-awards/](http://faithbeliefforum.org/programme/london-faith-belief-community-awards/).
- <sup>2</sup> These concepts are drawn from academic research on belonging. See **Antonsich**, M. (2010), Searching for belonging – an analytical framework. *Geography Compass*, 4(6), 644–659: doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x; **Nyhagen**, L. (2018). Citizenship, religion, gender and the politics of belonging: a case study of white, middle-class Christian men in the East Midlands, United Kingdom. *Culture and Religion* 19 (3): pp. 253–272; **Probyn**, E. (1996), *Outside Belongings*. London and New York: Routledge; **Taylor**, H. (2015). *Refugees and the Meaning of Home: Longing and Daily Life in London*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK; and Yuval-Davis, N. (2015). Power, Intersectionality and the Politics of Belonging. Aalborg: FREIA - Center for Gender Research, doi.org/10.5278/freia.58024502.
- <sup>3</sup> See **Jenkins**, R. (2014). *Social identity*. 4th ed. London: Routledge, p. 1.
- <sup>4</sup> We use the ‘faith and belief’ to refer to the protected characteristic of ‘religion and belief’ in the Equality Act 2010. For a list of protected characteristics, see **UK Government** (2017), The Equality Act 2010: [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents](http://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents).
- <sup>5</sup> See findings of the **Religion and Society Research Programme**, including the 2013 report ‘Religious discrimination in Britain: What difference does a decade make?’. [religionandsociety.org.uk/research\\_findings/featured\\_findings/religious\\_discrimination\\_in\\_britain\\_what\\_difference\\_does\\_a\\_decade\\_make](http://religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/featured_findings/religious_discrimination_in_britain_what_difference_does_a_decade_make). For the role of religion in violence and peace, see **Mira** (2015), ‘The Paradoxical Role of Religion and Spirituality in Conflict, Peacebuilding and Governance’: [politics.ox.ac.uk/cis/cis-research-the-paradoxical-role-of-religion-and-spirituality-in-conflict-peacebuilding-and-governance.html](http://politics.ox.ac.uk/cis/cis-research-the-paradoxical-role-of-religion-and-spirituality-in-conflict-peacebuilding-and-governance.html).
- <sup>6</sup> This research can be found in the 2017 **Faith & Belief Forum** report on ‘Faith, Belief and Belonging’, [faithbeliefforum.org/about/reports/#accordion-1](http://faithbeliefforum.org/about/reports/#accordion-1).
- <sup>7</sup> For more on intersectionality, see **Yuval-Davis**, N. (2015). *Power, Intersectionality and the Politics of Belonging*. Aalborg: FREIA - Center for Gender Research. doi.org/10.5278/freia.58024502.
- <sup>8</sup> See **Bosetti**, N., & **Colthorpe**, T. (2018). London identities. London: Centre for London, [centreforlondon.org/publication/london-identities/](http://centreforlondon.org/publication/london-identities/), pp. 1,18.
- <sup>9</sup> See **Riva**, P. & **Eck**, J. (eds.). (2016). *Social Exclusion - Psychological Approaches to Understanding and Reducing Its Impact*. Leiden: Springer, p. lx.
- <sup>10</sup> See **Fangen**, K., **Johansson**, T., and **Hammarén**, N. (eds.). (2011). *Young Migrants - Exclusion and Belonging in Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p.1.
- <sup>11</sup> See **Nyhagen**, L. and **Halsaa**, B. (2016), *Religion, Gender and Citizenship: Women of Faith, Gender Equality and Feminism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- <sup>12</sup> See **Hills**, J., **Le Grand**, J., and **Piachaud**, D. (eds.). (2002). *Understanding Social Exclusion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>13</sup> See **Bright**, G., **Thompson**, N., **Hart**, P., & **Hayden**, B. (2018). Faith-based Youth Work: Education, Engagement and Ethics. In P. Aldred, F. Cullen, K. Edwards, & D. Fusco (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Youth Work Practice* (pp. 197–212). London: Sage; **Thompson**, N. (2018). *Young People and Church Since 1900: Engagement and Exclusion*. London: Routledge.
- <sup>14</sup> Information on the London Faith & Belief Community Awards can be found at [faithbeliefforum.org/programme/london-faith-belief-community-awards/](http://faithbeliefforum.org/programme/london-faith-belief-community-awards/).
- <sup>15</sup> For more on ‘lived faith’, see **McGuire**, M. B. (2008). *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- <sup>16</sup> See **Shah**, S. (2016), Religion and Sexual Minorities: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Muslims. *Temple Tracts*, 2(5), 1–25.
- <sup>17</sup> For more information on religious literacy in the UK, see [religiousliteracy.org/](http://religiousliteracy.org/).
- <sup>18</sup> For more information on EY’s staff networks, see [ey.com/uk/en/about-us/our-people-and-culture/diversity-and-inclusiveness/about-ey---diversity-and-inclusiveness---our-networks](http://ey.com/uk/en/about-us/our-people-and-culture/diversity-and-inclusiveness/about-ey---diversity-and-inclusiveness---our-networks).

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**For further information please contact**

F&BF  
Star House  
104 Grafton Road,  
London NW5 4BA  
United Kingdom

faithbeliefforum.org  
info@faithbeliefforum.org.uk  
+44 (0) 207 482 9549

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