

Building social cohesion

Information
brochure 2020

Local authorities partnering with

**The
Faith
& Belief
Forum**





“Through the Faith & Belief Forum people meet their neighbour, talk to their neighbour, work with their neighbour, and see beyond the different clothes, dietary preferences and hot topic views, and recognise their neighbour as a fellow human being.”

HRH Princess Badiya bint El Hassan of Jordan

Help build a more connected and supportive society

We are the Faith & Belief Forum – one of the UK's most established interfaith and community cohesion organisations. Established in 1997, we have worked for over 20 years to build good relations between people from different backgrounds, and to create a society where difference is celebrated. Our work involves over 16,000 people annually – people of different religious and non-religious beliefs.

Our vision is a connected and supportive society where people of different faiths, beliefs and identities have strong, productive and lasting relations, and we have a proven track record of delivering innovative social cohesion projects at a grassroots level.

We passionately feel long term investment in building faith relations is of vital importance to social cohesion, and our projects can support the strategies already in place to benefit your entire community.

We work hard to remove barriers to participation, and emphasise the need for equitable relations in all aspects of project design as a means to ensuring participation by all, especially more marginalised individuals, groups and communities.

Our expertise is developing and delivering creative methods for facilitating encounters and dialogue between people of different faiths, beliefs, and identities. We deliver a wide range of projects to an increasing number of Local Authorities.

The Government defines strong, integrated communities as where residents – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

Successive waves of migration have changed Britain; for some that is a reason for celebration, for others, it is unsettling. The result of the EU referendum in the UK was indicative of feelings of anxiety as immigration became closely linked to economic insecurities deepened by the austerity measures of recent governments.

The major challenges local authorities face – such as hate crimes, integration of new arrivals, segregation, division and mistrust amongst neighbours – requires strategies and support from various sources. Local faith organisations are an often un-celebrated but vital asset, providing community services for the homeless, youth, elderly, mental and physical health, and much more.

Local authorities are in a unique position to enable real social change in partnership with faith communities that are often underused. These organisations have access to resources, space, people, volunteers, and contribute vital services at the grassroots level for the community as a whole. Strong, productive relations between faith groups and local authorities are vital for social cohesion.

Recognising that tailored local integration plans are needed to tackle issues that are specific to each area, the Government launched its Integrated Communities Action Plan in 2019, which sets out 70 actions it will deliver to promote integration and cohesion.

“Now is the time for reconciliation and dialogue, to begin to build more understanding between our different social, cultural and political ‘tribes’.”

**Phil Champaign, Director,
The Faith & Belief Forum**



A quarter of all charities in the UK are now faith-based

– a total of 49,881 across the country –
a significant rise since 2014

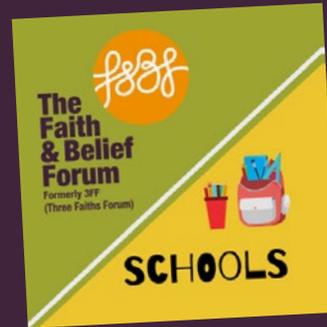
(R. Wharton and L. de Las Casas,
What a Difference Faith Makes: Insights on faith-based
charities (London: NCP, 2016), 5, 11.)

Become a Beacon Borough for faith inclusion

By becoming a Beacon Borough, together we will tackle many of the issues affecting your community. Beacon Boroughs go well beyond their targets by implementing focused actions positively affecting individuals and policy makers alike. We have experience in combining our various projects to suit specific boroughs, touching on many of the issues at the heart of social tension.

We want to work in a partnership approach with Local Authorities because you are uniquely placed to innovate, create new and exciting solutions to challenges, and build more resilient communities.

Our current Local Authority partnerships with Walsall, Barking & Dagenham and Waltham Forest have all been carefully and concisely planned in direct collaboration with Cohesion Officers, councillors, local faith leaders, schools, community groups and more.



WALSALL FOR ALL



Schools in 2019

- 357 workshops, reaching 9,804 people
- 106 classes involved in linking which has engaged 2,751 people

Community 2019

- Social Action Projects positively affected more than 1,849 people

The Charter for Faith & Belief Inclusion

- 75 signatories from councils and government departments to faith and community organisations

Challenging hate through education

To succeed in today's complex and diverse world, young people need to be able to communicate sensitively and effectively with anyone, regardless of beliefs or background. F&BF's award-winning workshops and linking programmes help students explore issues of identity, community and belief, promoting meaningful social mixing amongst young people and challenging stereotypes. We also provide Continuing Professional Development for teachers led by our trained facilitators.

All our school projects are designed to help young people build religious literacy, empathy, and skills for dialogue and communication. Our workshops support the RE, PSHE and citizenship curricula, as well as SMSC, British Values and pastoral provision.

Over 12,000 people have been involved in school linking days since 2010



“I honestly think that school linking is the most important thing I've ever done in my life”

Primary School Teacher

Case Study - Waltham Forest

The localised model of the Waltham Forest linking programme, made possible by support from MHCLG and The Linking Network, enables schools to build on relationships formed through local authority initiatives, strengthen local interfaith capacity and work collaboratively across shared contexts.

Through exploring themes of Identity, Diversity and Community, the programme aims to equip teachers through CPD's and learners through the Link days with the tools and language needed to sensitively navigate difference and to meaningfully celebrate diversity.

Now in its third year, we have successfully guided 36 schools and over 1,000 students in deepening knowledge and understanding of different beliefs.

“I feel it was more about just getting to know each other. I actually made friends. I got to learn about their beliefs and they learnt about ours. We got to experience each other’s lives and how different but also how similar we are.”

Secondary School Student

Celebrating faith-based social action

Our Faith & Belief Community Awards shine a light on the many unrecognised voluntary organisations, projects and individuals working for positive change, strengthening the relationship between Council and volunteer groups to improve trust and build social capital and cohesion.

Our London Faith & Belief Community Awards have highlighted the vital work of over 313 projects since 2017, in categories ranging from inspiring youth and wellbeing to interfaith relations and inclusion. In 2020, F&BF are delivering Faith & Belief Community Awards with four local authorities.

“The projects recognised in the Faith & Belief Community Awards are really the cohesive force of London. Through this event we witness the power faith and belief groups generate in the civic life of the City.”

David Dangoor DL, Chair of the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London's Council



Case Study - Walsall (Metropolitan area, West Midlands)

As part of being one of the government's five pilot integration areas, Walsall needed to create opportunities for local groups and organisations to create strong partnerships and deliver meaningful activities that will create short-term and long-term impact.

In collaboration with Walsall Council, we launched a major Dialogue Programme. Through three phases of Local Dialogue, Linked Dialogue and Final Conference, we encourage local people to engage in conversations about the things that are important to them, bringing them together to discuss identity, diversity and living together. We aim to give opportunities for local people to have their voices and stories heard and connect with others across Walsall.

March 2020 also saw the first ceremony of the Walsall Community Recognition Awards – to celebrate the community's cultural, faith and belief unsung heroes.

“It was good to be with other like-minded people who know that together, in unity, celebrating our diversity as a community, we are all the stronger. It's a reflection of our country: different backgrounds, different languages, one people.”

Colin Townsend, Signs for Worship

Connecting faith leaders and decision makers

We work with faith leaders and local authority decision makers to convene engaging, thought-provoking workshops, trainings and roundtable discussions on key topics such as faith inclusion and engagement, skills for dialogue, the LGBT and faith intersection, responding to controversial issues and more – all led by expert facilitators and trained speakers. These can be tailored according to your Borough's specific issues and needs.

We welcome diverse discussions on difficult subjects, creating safe spaces for faith leaders and decision makers to connect, share and build trust. Some of our recent projects have led to faith inclusion training with frontline council staff, panel discussions on authentic leadership, and ongoing capacity building training for local Faith Forums.

In the last year alone we reached over 9,000 people via our workshops, facilitated by a pool of over 90 speakers and volunteers.

“The training really opened my eyes! We have been able to implement it straight away to offer better support to LGBT people of faith.”

Participant, 2018



Case study: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Supporting Barking and Dagenham's commitment to promoting equality and reducing social exclusion, hate crime, discrimination and intolerance, the Faith & Belief Forum engaged in an exciting 22-month interfaith project, funded by the LBBDCouncil. The project worked to build a more

connected borough through a multi-strand approach. We built the capacity of the local Faith Forum, facilitated the creation of a Faith Policy with Council staff and over 40 local faith groups, lead workshops, events and youth leadership trainings, and reached over 400 students in the area with bespoke workshops in schools.



Creating trust through collaborative policies

The creation of a Faith Policy by a local authority in collaboration with the local community is a sign of trust and ongoing partnership. It is designed to identify practical ways forward and represent a commitment from signatories to working together to foster good relations between people of different beliefs in communities, workplaces and wider society. We believe our experience with the LBB Council demonstrates the importance of community-based policy development when it comes to faith and belief.



“This collaboratively designed policy represents a brave step forward in realising the ambitious vision of a faith-friendly borough that is inclusive of all faith and belief.”

**Councillor Saima Ashraf, Deputy Leader of Barking & Dagenham Council
(and Cabinet Member for Community, Leadership & Engagement)**

The Charter for Faith & Belief Inclusion

Our Charter for Faith & Belief Inclusion establishes a network of supportive organisations who believe in a diverse society which is welcoming to all people, of all backgrounds and beliefs. We invite organisations and Councils across the UK to help us create understanding between people of different backgrounds, bringing our communities closer together. Signatories to the Charter so far include: The Department for Education, The Foreign & Commonwealth Office,

Coventry University, Hindu Forum of Britain, Humanists UK and the Exilarch's Foundation.

You can join the Local Authorities and Councils below who have already signed, showing a commitment to working together in a spirit of partnership to promote good relations between people of different beliefs in our communities, workplaces and wider society. Please contact us for more information.



What you can do next

Set up a free consultation

Discuss the next steps by simply contacting our Director Phil Champain at phil@faithbeliefforum.org or call: +44 (0) 207 482 9549

Sign our Charter

Visit us at www.faithbeliefforum.org/charter

Find us online

Hear more about the Faith & Belief Forums upcoming events and news on www.faithbeliefforum.org

Find us on social media

