



2025-26 Summary Report

July 2026

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Introduction

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) exists to explore the role that faith plays in society, particularly through the work of faith-based organisations. It was formed after an initial idea by FaithAction in conversation with the Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP.

The group held its inaugural meeting in January 2012 and has continued to receive support and interest from parliamentarians.

The most recent AGM was held in March 2025.

We are grateful to the group's officers, who in 2025-26 were the following:

- Chair: Zöe Franklin MP
- Officer: Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London
- Officer: Anna Dixon MP
- Officer: Danny Kruger MP

The aims of the group are:

1. To promote understanding of faith-based organisations engaged in social action in the UK, and recognition of their value;
2. To highlight the social, civic, and spiritual capital that faith-based organisations contribute to communities throughout the UK, and to identify and promote best practice among organisations;
3. To consider regulatory and legislative arrangements which can make the most of the potential contribution of faith-based organisations;
4. To learn from and contribute to international conversations, policy, and civic action on the contribution of faith-based organisations.

The APPG website is www.faithandsociety.org.



Key Activity in 2025-2026

National Youth Strategy – Ensuring faith voices are heard

Faith-based groups offer safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive spaces for young people. Following concern from officers and members around a lack of engagement with faith leaders during the development of the government's youth strategy, chair Zöe Franklin MP submitted a written question to raise this issue.

APPG on Islamic and Ethical Finance – exploring collaboration

Officers of the APPG met with Lord Alderice, representative for APPG on Islamic and Ethical Finance, to explore areas of shared interest.

Faith and Social Care - Contributing to the Independent Commission on Adult Social Care



The APPG engaged with the Department of Health and Social Care in October 2025 to represent the voice of faith in the Independent Commission on Adult Social Care on social care reform to ensure that the role of faith is recognised and embedded in future reform plans. A roundtable, chaired by APPG officer Anna Dixon MP, brought together sector representatives and policymakers including a representative of the Independent Commission.

Discussions emphasised the importance of spiritual well-being in care provision and noted increased uptake of chaplaincy services. Faith organisations also highlighted their contribution to informal community support, including services for vulnerable groups. The discussion included envisioning how collaboration between statutory services and voluntary services can help strengthen faith-informed care services.

Faith in Partnership Week 2025



The 4th annual Faith in Partnership week took place in September 2025. The Faith in Partnership Week campaign was conceived and set up through the APPG in 2022. FaithAction facilitated the week to celebrate and champion cross-sector partnerships between faith communities and statutory organisations.

Part of the aim of the week is to encourage more areas to sign the Faith Covenant. The week consisted of a series of in-person and online events and blogs to bring together faith groups, statutory body representatives, local

authority representatives, parliamentarians and others to highlight some of the fantastic work being done as part of this collaboration.

Safeguarding and Good Governance in Faith Communities

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) provided a blog on the importance of safeguarding and their commitment to supporting the blog, published and shared by FaithAction, acknowledged that many faith organisations demonstrate strong governance, with safeguarding central to their work, including the use of DBS checks to protect individuals and communities. They also recognised that the process can be complex and provided information on their new campaign to improve understanding of the duty to refer and make safeguarding processes more accessible, including through resources and outreach initiatives.

Launch Event of the Evaluation of the Faith Covenant



The Faith Covenant Evaluation Launch took place on 8th September 2025 during Faith in Partnership Week. Chaired by Zöe Franklin MP and featuring Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP, the event marked the launch of a research project led by Dr Daniel Range to assess the Covenant's effectiveness in fostering collaboration between faith communities and local authorities.

Speakers included Tim Jones, Mustafa Field, Steve Botham, and Aman Jaswal, who shared insights from Brighton and Hove, Brent, and the West Midlands on implementing the Covenant to strengthen community partnerships. The launch aimed to highlight best practices, identify challenges, and inform future development of the Faith Covenant, ensuring faith organisations can effectively support social cohesion and local policy delivery.

ChurchWorks: Faith and Local Services in Partnership, 11th September 2025

The ChurchWorks: Faith and Local Services in Partnership webinar, explored how local faith groups can collaborate with statutory services, including Family Hubs and social prescribing.

Speakers, including Sarah Hinton, Tina Paddon, and Emma Malcolm, shared case studies of successful partnerships. The event highlighted the unique role of faith communities in service delivery and introduced practical resources to support collaboration with public services.

Faith Covenant Evaluation Update Meeting

An online meeting chaired by Zöe Franklin MP, provided progress on the Research Phase of the evaluation (Sept 2025–Mar 2026) ahead of the Implementation Phase. Researchers Dr Daniel Range and Dr Aurélie Broeckerhoff gave attendees an opportunity to see early findings from the evaluation, reporting that the Covenant strengthens trust and collaboration between faith groups and local authorities, improves crisis response, and supports daily partnership work. Success depends on leadership, governance, local context, and capacity, and it mainly amplifies existing relationships. Opportunities identified include sharing best practices, peer mentoring, and self-evaluation tools.

The researchers shared next steps involving completing interviews, deepening case studies, launching a report, and developing guidance for the Implementation Phase.

Questions of Hope and Hate – Faith and Faultlines in a Changing Britain



The “Questions of Hope and Hate: Faith and Faultlines in a Changing Britain” report launch on 12th January 2026 at Portcullis House brought together parliamentarians, faith leaders, and civil society representatives. Sponsored by Anna Dixon MP for the APPG on Faith and Society, the event presented research by Hope Not Hate and the Good Faith Partnership on faith, politics, and social cohesion in Britain.

Speakers, including Anna Dixon MP, Zöe Franklin MP, Lord Russell Rook OBE, and Nick Lowles, discussed declining trust in institutions, hate crime, and the misuse of religious symbolism. The report called for greater engagement with faith communities, improved religious literacy, and strengthened interfaith and grassroots partnerships.

King’s College London Students Join APPG Discussion



The APPG on Faith & Society hosted a discussion on 12th February 2026 for a group of King's College London students on the role of faith in public life, giving them the chance to engage directly with parliamentarians about how belief, values, and political responsibility intersect. The session was chaired by Daniel Singleton of FaithAction. Speakers included Lord Rees OBE, Sarah Smith MP, Darren Paffey MP, and Lord Alderdice. Each reflected on their own journeys and answered questions from students, offering insights into how faith influences political engagement and policymaking.

The Faith Covenant: Update Report

The roll-out of the Faith Covenant continues to be a focus for the APPG's public work. The Covenant emerged from a series of roundtable meetings held by the APPG in 2012 to explore the work of faith-based organisations. It is a joint commitment between faith communities and local authorities to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to remove some of the mistrust that exists and to promote open, practical working on all levels. It is built on the recognition that, in order to meet the challenges the country faces, we need to unlock the potential of every part of civil society to contribute – including faith groups.

For further information on the development of the Faith Covenant, and its text, see the Appendix.

Covenant areas

The Covenant has been signed in 33 local areas, meaning that over 12 million people live in areas that have adopted it.

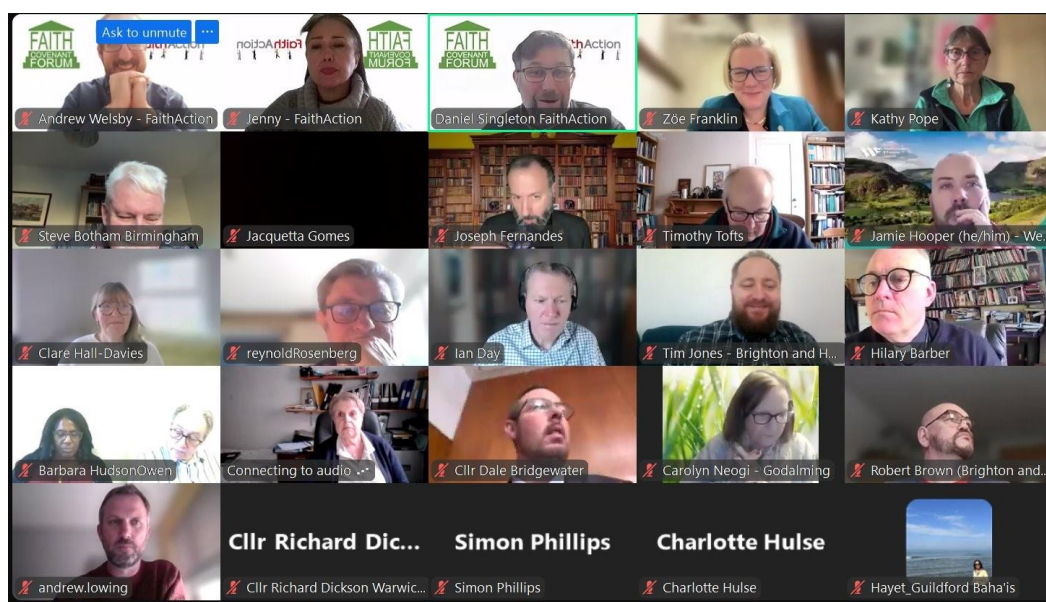
Birmingham	Castle Point
Leeds	Harlow
Northamptonshire	Epping Forest
Barnet	Brent
Solihull	Wolverhampton
Calderdale	Preston
Southampton	Brighton and Hove
Blackpool	Coventry
Essex	West Midlands Combined Authority
Basildon	Sandwell
Braintree	Walsall
Chelmsford	Dundee
Colchester	Welwyn Hatfield
Maldon	Hertfordshire
Rochford	Cornwall
Brentwood	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Uttlesford	

Faith Covenant Activity

Faith Covenant Forums

Faith Covenant Forum meetings bring together council and faith representatives from across the Faith Covenant areas to share ideas best practice. It has also proved to be a valuable opportunity for prospective or interested local authority areas to attend and gain insight as to what signing a Covenant might involve.

The meetings are online and were chaired by Zöe Franklin MP and Daniel Singleton, National Executive Director of FaithAction.



The eleventh meeting of the Faith Covenant Forum took place on 14th May 2025.

- Discussion involved emerging issues around local government reorganisation and how it might affect Faith Covenant partnerships
- Updates from attendees on practical work such as faith literacy programmes, social action mapping, and interfaith engagement
- Attendees explored ways to sustain and adapt Covenant arrangements through transition.

The twelfth meeting of the Faith Covenant Forum took place on 20th November 2025.

- Discussions focused on activities during Interfaith Week
- Thoughts on how Faith Covenants are supporting civic-faith dialogue
- Attendees shared how their local areas are strengthening collaboration between councils and faith groups.

The thirteenth meeting of the Faith Covenant Forum took place on 9th February 2026.

- Dr Daniel Range of Coventry University shared learning and hear initial findings from the ongoing evaluation of the Faith Covenant
- Discussions focused around completing the final report, planning a launch event, and developing a best practice handbook and support structures to guide Covenant implementation through 2027.

Future Faith Covenant Areas

FaithAction continues to offer advice and support to faith groups and/or councils in areas that are considering adopting the Covenant, as well as connecting them with existing Covenant areas in order to share learning.

Other areas that are currently exploring adopting the Covenant include: Lancashire, Watford, Wiltshire, Guildford, Waverly and London Borough of Camden.

The areas of Barnet and Leeds have shown interest in renewing their existing Faith Covenants in the year ahead.

The Faith Covenant Toolkit: What, Why, How?

The *Faith Covenant Toolkit* continues to be utilised by faith groups and local authorities, over 3000 copies have been downloaded since its launch in September 2022. The toolkit is designed to be a primer for anyone (whether in a local authority or a faith organisation) interested in the Faith Covenant. It contains case studies from a number of Covenant areas, with top tips, core principles, and first steps on the journey to signing.



Future Plans

We have will continue to work closely with areas that have shown interest in the Faith Covenant this year and will continue to encourage others to initiate the Faith Covenant in their area.

Current potential areas of work for the APPG in the year ahead are:

- Faith in Partnership Week 2026. Faith in Partnership Week celebrates collaboration between faith groups and statutory bodies in the UK to drive positive change for vulnerable communities. This week of activity will potentially include:
 - Partnering with the Gather Movement to launch their **A Hidden Welfare System on Our Doorstep** report.
 - Faith Covenant launches, new areas that sign during this week
 - Faith covenant forum, online discussion sharing best practice
- Approaches by researchers: The APPG is often approached by academics involved in or proposing new research, who would like to present their work.
- Faith and Homelessness: exploring how faith groups can have an impact on homelessness in their communities.
- Faith and Social Cohesion: approaching the Faith Minister at MHCLG to examine how faith groups can contribute to, and give feedback on, efforts to improve social cohesion within the country
- Reactive work: responding to requests from APPG officers and members

Appendix

The Faith Covenant: development and text

Background

The Covenant emerged from a series of roundtable meetings held by the APPG in 2012 to explore the work of faith-based organisations. These focused on the areas of welfare to work, children and young people, and health and wellbeing, as well as the work of faith groups internationally.

A common theme emerging from these discussions was a concern about the relationship between faith-based organisations and local authorities. On the one hand, local authorities and grant-making bodies can be uneasy about faith playing a part in service delivery. As a consequence, faith-based organisations often feel compelled to downplay the role and importance of faith in their work, although to them it plays a central part – resulting in a lack of integrity. On the other hand, religious illiteracy among local authorities means there is a difficulty in understanding what faith-based organisations are about and how best to relate to them.

During the 2013 Annual General Meeting of the APPG, the Rt Hon David Lammy MP suggested that faith groups might be able to encourage local authorities to sign up to a charter setting out an agreement for how the two would relate to each other.

This led to the development by the APPG of the Covenant for engagement between local authorities and faith groups. Professor Francis Davis also played a key part in drafting the text of the Covenant.

The full text of the Covenant can be found below. The Covenant is a joint commitment between faith communities and local authorities to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to remove some of the mistrust that exists and to promote open, practical working on all levels.

Covenant text

The coming decade will see the country facing new social needs and tough new challenges. There will be fresh demands on public health, social care, education, employment support and community inclusion. These challenges will require the identification of a new set of resources. We will need to unlock the potential of every part of our society to contribute together towards solutions.

We believe that one important resource can be realised by supporting faith-based organisations to work constructively and effectively, as part of civil society, with local authorities. That will mean ensuring that local authorities are confident in commissioning services from and transferring assets to appropriately qualified faith-based organisations, and that they include faith groups when they look for solutions to social needs.

The APPG on Faith and Society is convinced that faith groups have a great deal to offer as providers and advocates for the communities in which they serve, and that some of their potential is being unnecessarily overlooked at present. To help tackle the problem, the Group has drafted a Covenant which can be adopted by faith groups and local authorities in cities across the UK.

The Covenant principles are currently in draft form, and in some cases have been adapted to suit local circumstances. Local authorities that are interested in adopting the Covenant should contact FaithAction.

The Covenant

The Covenant is a joint commitment between faith communities and local authorities to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to remove some of the mistrust that exists and to promote open, practical working on all levels.

Together, local authorities and faith communities should work out a local version of the commitments below, according to the priorities and needs of that locality.

The Covenant is built on the following principles:

- Faith communities are free to practise their beliefs and religious observances without restriction, and to raise their voice in public debate and to be respected, within the framework of UK law.
- Public services and faith based social action should respect service users from all backgrounds, with no discrimination on the grounds of religion, gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, mental capability, or long-term condition.
- The voice, participation, and solutions that faith communities bring are important, and consultation should enable them to be brought to bear for the benefit of the wider community.
- Organisations and services are stronger for drawing on diverse sources of funding; monopolies of funding, action and participation are damaging.

The Covenant entails the following commitments: Local authorities commit to welcome the involvement of faith groups in the delivery of services and social action on an equal basis with other groups. In addition, they commit to:

- Building relationships and trust with faith groups;
- Adopting strategies for the engagement of faith communities in consultation exercises;
- Encouraging faith groups and their members to be involved in the reshaping and redesign of local services;
- Establishing clear guidelines around funding;

- Sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the local authority.

Faith-based organisations commit to work actively with local authorities in the design and delivery of services to the public. In addition, they commit to:

- Seeking opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, particularly its poorest and most isolated members;
- Serving equally all local residents seeking to access the public services they offer, irrespective of their religion, gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, mental capability, or long-term condition;
- Using resources provided for delivering a service wholly for that purpose, and not for any other;
- Ensuring excellence in child protection, health and safety, accountability and transparency;
- Responding to consultations where appropriate;
- Sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the local authority.



FaithAction, secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society, is a national network of faith-based and community organisations and a member of the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance, working with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, and Public Health England. FaithAction works to provide support, advice, and training for its members, as well as partnering with local and central governments to highlight the contributions made by these organisations to their communities.

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