

Blackpool Council and Faith Communities Partnership

Purpose

This agreement is a joint commitment between the faith communities of Blackpool and the Council, to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to deepen collaborative partnerships and to promote open, practical working on all levels. The coming years will see our community facing continued high levels of social needs and tough new challenges. There will be fresh demands on public health, social care, education, employment support and community inclusion.

Aim

Working together in constructive partnership, we aim to help more people and communities flourish and meet their full potential.

The partnership is built on the following principles:

- Faith communities are a key component of civic society. Free to practise and celebrate their beliefs and religious observances without restriction, and to raise their voice in public debate and to be respected.
- Public services and faith based social action¹ should respect service users from all backgrounds, without 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 their involvement in the decision making process should enable them to benefit the wider community.
- Mutual respect and appreciation for the special role, authority and resources of the Council and Faith groups. This includes the Council's status as a constituted public body with a wide range of statutory responsibilities, and Faith Groups independent authority, volunteer base and appreciation of the limited resources that can be deployed.

The Agreement entails the following commitments:

Blackpool Council commits to welcome the involvement of faith groups in the delivery of services and social action on an equal basis with other Civil Society groups. In addition, the Council commits to:

- Building relationships and trust with faith groups;
- Facilitate appropriate strategies for the engagement of faith communities in decision making processes;
- Encouraging faith groups and their members to be involved in social action and the reshaping and redesign of local services;
- Where possible, sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the local authority.
- Maintaining open and transparent procedures for funding and commissioning of services that wherever possible welcome faith based organisations as potential service providers and do not discriminate against their tenders.

Faith based organisations commit to work actively, wherever possible, with the Council in addressing social and community needs and the wider delivery of services to the public.

In addition, they commit to:

- Seeking opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, building social cohesion and empowering people - particularly mindful of its poorest and most isolated members;
- Serving all local residents seeking to access services equally, irrespective of their religion, gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, mental capability or long term condition;
- Ensuring excellence in child protection, health and safety, accountability and transparency and collaborating where appropriate with public agencies on these issues.
- Responding to consultations where appropriate;
- Where possible, sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the local authority.

Monitoring the Agreement

A monitoring group of senior representatives from the Faith Groups and Council will come together on an annual basis, in order to both review and renew the commitments set out in this agreement.

¹Faith based social action – can broadly be defined as practical action in the service of others, which is:

- carried out by individuals or groups of people working together
- not mandated and not for profit
- done for the good of others - individuals, communities and/or society bringing about change and/or value

It does not cover the Religious teaching, rituals, instruction or worship related activities of Faith groups.