

FaithAction



THE DESIRE FOR
DECENCY

OUR MANIFESTO

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THE DESIRE FOR DECENCY

decency noun

/ˈdiːnsɪ/

1. Thoughtful behaviour founded on treating others with justice and dignity.
2. The requirements for a reasonable standard of life.

We have summarised our desires in this manifesto as a desire for decency. We want to see a government that promotes decency for the communities of the United Kingdom, as well as seeking to promote this decent life to both our next-door and global neighbours.

“What is decent?” is a question that can be asked of policy far beyond that which is covered in the specific ideas contained in these pages. The question of how we promote decency in terms of quality of life and conduct of ourselves and others can be a guiding principle for the Ministry of Defence as much as it is for Defra, DWP, or the Home Office.

Our manifesto, therefore, asks for more than the adoption of some policy ideas; it asks for a rethink and a different approach as a nation.



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THIS IS OUR CONTRIBUTION

FOR POLITICIANS, POLICY MAKERS AND FUNDERS



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SOCIAL PRESCRIBING MUST HARNESS THE ENERGY OF FAITH-BASED ASSETS

While social prescribing has been happening across the UK (in different forms) for a long time, awareness of, and involvement in, these initiatives is patchy. With social prescribing forming a core part of plans to tackle loneliness, and the NHS Long Term Plan promising new funding and training to make it happen, it is crucial that its implementation includes the full breadth of the faith sector's offer.



- Social prescribing is rolled out simply and effectively: models should be shaped by the co-production of all parties, including the faith and voluntary sectors.
- A growth of awareness within the system: Link workers and GPs should ensure that they are appraised of the faith sector's contribution to social action in their locality, ensuring that the skills and experience of faith based organisations are recognised and resourced appropriately.



Training for link workers to recognise opportunities in different sectors, and mapping of social prescribing 'destinations' including faith and community assets is imperative within primary care networks. Where appropriate, funding should be offered to organisations receiving referrals.



MIND THE GAP!

Faith and community assets are often at the sharp end of dealing with the shortfall in public sector provision and government policy. There are too many ways for the most disadvantaged to fall through the gaps in UK society. Some policies have obvious good intent but fail through poor execution. We are calling on the next government to fix the gaps between policy aspiration and user experience.

- Reducing the gap between the application for benefits payments and the receipt of these payments.
- Adequate provision for ex-offenders who are currently released from prison with only £46 and no guaranteed accommodation.
- A review of the unequal system of family benefits which works against stay-at-home parents, recognising that not all families choose to use third-party childcare to care for their children.



IT LOOKS
LIKE THIS

Policy needs to be tested and developed with the input of civil society groups¹, as part of greater transparency input, recorded in a 'you said, we did' framework so it is clear if government chooses not to take up the advice provided by civil society and faith groups.



WHAT NEEDS
TO HAPPEN

¹ A good example of this is the Health and Well-being Alliance.
www.england.nhs.uk/hwalliance/

RECOGNISE THE SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND BENEFITS OF FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS AND RESOURCE APPROPRIATELY



Some problems—mental health, addiction, loneliness—affect us all. They are everyone’s business, and we should be looking for common solutions to these common problems. Historically, faith-based organisations have played a central role in these efforts, and the relationships, access, experience, and volunteers bring lived expertise to the table. Built on relationships, faith-based organisations often go above and beyond the mandate, while maintaining low transactional costs. They also provide long-lasting social capital. Faith communities offer places of belonging, rehabilitation, healing, learning, creativity, and transformation. These surplus benefits ought to be recognised.

IT LOOKS LIKE THIS

- Local governments should train, resource, and ‘join up’ with voluntary sector and faith-based organisations already involved in addiction recovery, mental health support, and tackling social isolation.
- Local MPs and party leaders should commit to meet with faith leaders and faith-based organisations regularly. This will help build relationship and avoid tokenism.
- Central government should be aware of the social capital they are ‘buying’ when working with FBOs and reflect this when it comes to budgetary decisions.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

The Faith Covenant² should be adopted by Local Authorities who should identify and mould the Covenant to fit and strengthen partnerships with their communities.

² www.faihandociety.org/covenant/



INITIATIVES TACKLING LONELINESS SHOULD INTENTIONALLY INCLUDE FAITH

Over 9 million people of all ages say they ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel lonely.³ In recent years, a government loneliness strategy has been published and ministerial responsibility given to the issue. FaithAction’s report “Right Up Your Street”, launched in July, highlighted the significant work that faith-based organisations have long been doing to tackle the problem nationwide. Loneliness must remain high on the Government’s agenda, and national initiatives should draw from the knowledge of faith groups, who are among the most experienced people working in this area.

- Strong ministerial responsibility to provide momentum and build on the work already started on loneliness, continuing into 2020 and beyond.
- National initiatives aimed at tackling loneliness should intentionally include faith communities and faith-based organisations to learn from their successes and replicate good practice nationwide.



IT LOOKS LIKE THIS



We’re calling for a “loneliness impact assessment” to be introduced on all domestic policy so that progress made, and the effectiveness of all initiatives, can be better measured. The long-standing contribution of faith-based organisations and faith groups needs to be recognised and their expertise should be leveraged by invited them to discuss and shape future policy.



WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN



³ Jopling, K. and Howells, A. (2018). *Connecting communities to tackle loneliness and social isolation: Learning report*. Manchester and London: Co-op / British Red Cross / Kaleidoscope

UNITING THE UK A PRIORITY FOR 2020



There are strains upon the very fabric of UK society. These are due to the political dislocations from the Brexit referendum, the disruption to society flowing from the financial crash of 2008, and the nature of unprecedented globalisation and technological change. The issues are complex and it has suited some leaders to magnify the differences and dis-unity. There now needs to be a concerted effort embraced by those in parliament and government to bring the country together.



IT LOOKS LIKE THIS

- Time to celebrate what is good in society and why many strive to belong here. Our compassion and generosity toward the 'underdog' is widely recognised as a noble trait. This should guide our attitude towards a sensible immigration policy.
- See loneliness, social isolation, and integration as related issues, which need to be addressed universally, rather than siloed into policy related to older people, young people, and new arrivals.
- A more active discussion around what is Britishness and how different groups contribute to this ever-evolving yet timeless phenomenon.
- Test policy against a 'unity test', i.e. will new initiatives cause division, or serve to bring people together?



WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN



We're calling for a **Minister for the Unity of the UK** in cabinet—whose first order of business should be to approach faith groups on how they, along with other community groups, bring cohesion to people of diverse backgrounds (class, race and origin).

OUR CHALLENGE TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Create a faith-based unit within the government. The purpose of the unit will be to form partnerships between the government and faith-based organisations, to more effectively serve the people and communities that they represent, and to be embedded in all delivery at the local level.

The unit should be cross-departmental and accountable to a cabinet-level minister. The unit should be founded on the principle that it is these organisations, birthed at grassroots level, that are best placed to meet local needs.

This would be central to a new settlement between government and faith groups, a recognition that there needs to be new ways sought to solve today's complex problems. There needs to be a more creative way of releasing resources, to enact things like asset transfers so that groups with the passion and drive to make a difference have the resources to do so. This will entail a recognition of what faith gives to these areas, and the fact that community is often at the core of any transformation.



OUR CHALLENGE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local authorities should sign the Covenant and enter a new era of working with faith-based organisations. A greater level of dialogue is needed, and feedback on what is working should be freely shared. Tokenism must be avoided. Multilateral discussions are good, but not a replacement for the building of relationships with individuals and their communities.

We say “share your concerns,” and you may find that local faith groups are well-positioned to share in the burden and the solutions. For example, faith groups could contribute to the local *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* and *Health and Wellbeing Strategy*. Faith groups could also be used to shape solutions within the planning cycle, to make consultation powerful and effective and to allow quality decisions to be made.



HOLD YOUR LOCAL MP TO ACCOUNT

CHALLENGE THEM ON THEIR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

How much do you know about the activities of faith-based organisations in the area?

Do you know what issues what to faith communities here?

Which of the proposals in this manifesto will you adopt?

Do you know about the Covenant
and will you write to your local authority in support of it?

How will you support local initiatives, particularly from faith groups?

WHY NOT TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR OWN FAITH GROUP?

My faith group is:

We are involved in:

Tell us how you get on. Drop us a line!

Tweet us **@FaithActionnet** with **#faithmanifesto** or give us a call on **0800 804 8829**

And find out more at **yoursay.faithaction.net**



WHO
WE ARE

FAITHACTION—BECAUSE FAITH IS
TOO SIGNIFICANT TO IGNORE.

We fund, train, advise, campaign,
research, and innovate. We do this
as a national network supporting
faith-based organisation at work in
their local communities.



FaithAction

*Supporting people to put their faith into action;
bringing faith into policy making; building stronger communities.*

www.faithaction.net

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