

Brent Faith Covenant

The faith covenant was introduced by the all-party parliamentary group on faith and society. In May 2016, following a debate in parliament around the contribution of faith organisations to the voluntary sector in communities, the APPG pressed for national support and uptake of the faith covenant.

It states commitment from faith groups and the Council to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to combat mistrust and to promote open, practical working. Discussion with Brent's local faith communities through Brent Multi-Faith Forum has made clear that they will benefit from a clear statement of support and involvement from the council, and a vision of support for faith in Brent - so we are pleased to be taking this up.

Faith groups have a lot to offer the council as support networks and advocates for the communities in which they serve. This is an important resource to support faith organisations within the local area and Brent council to work constructively, and effectively together.

In Brent there are more people with faith on average than in both London and England with 82% declaring a faith compared to 68 and 71%. As well as the six main beliefs (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Sikhism) Brent has followers of 36 other religions, including just under 2,500 Jains, 178 Rastafarians, and 152 Zoroastrians.

The Faith 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 or lack of religious beliefs, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities or long term health conditions. The needs of socio-economic and vulnerable groups should also be considered.
- The voice, participation and solutions that faith communities bring are vital, 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 Faith Covenant entails the following commitments:

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

1. Actively building trust, and sustaining productive relationships with faith based organisations;
2. Ensuring faith based organisations are included in appropriate consultation and civic engagement events;
3. Encouraging faith groups and their members to be involved in the reshaping and redesign of local services;

4. Developing awareness raising and training opportunities between faith communities and the local authority;
5. Seeking to develop opportunities for the council and faith organisations to work together creatively;
6. Providing open and transparent communication in all aspects regarding funding;
7. Clearly communicating the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010, and the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Human Rights Act 1998, and other relevant legislation; and ensuring that its partners are adhering to its Equality and Diversity strategy;
8. Respect and understand the underlying humanitarian ethical values of the faith communities.

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:

1. Seeking opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, particularly its poorest and most isolated members;
2. Serving all local residents **seeking to access non-religious, public services** equally, without proselytising, irrespective of their religion, gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, mental capacity, or long term condition;
3. Ensuring excellence in child protection, health and safety, accountability and transparency;
4. Responding to consultations where appropriate;
5. Developing and sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and Partners for Brent;
6. Understand the 2010 Equality Act ([link](#)) and Brent Equality strategy and policy ([link](#)), challenging the Council to deliver the services accordingly where appropriate.

We pledge to honour these commitments and will work in partnership with people of faith to deliver a relationship which benefits all of our cultures and communities.

[Cllr Tom Miller, DATE 2017]



Brent Multi-Faith Forum

