



All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society *Covenant for Engagement*



Introduction:

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

This Covenant is a joint commitment between **Southampton Council of Faiths (SCOF)*** and **Southampton City Council (SCC)** to a set of principles that guide engagement and to promote open, practical working on all levels.

*Southampton Council of Faiths is a registered charity representing the seven main faith communities in the city – Buddhist, Baha'i, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. There are five representatives from each faith and they work together to promote peace and understanding in the Southampton and surrounding area..

The Covenant is built on the following principles between SCOF and SCC:

- 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:

SCC: 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.

SCOF: 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 all local residents seeking to access non-religious services equally, without proselytizing, 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 & safety, accountability and transparency;
- Responding to consultations where appropriate;
- Sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the local authority.

This covenant is signed by


.....
(signature)

Cllr Les Harris Mayor of Southampton

Cllr Stephen Barnes-Andrews – Sheriff


.....

Cllr Satvir Kaur – SCC


.....



.....



.....


.....
(Signature)

Ravi Parmar - Chair of SCOF (Hindu Rep)


.....
David Vane - Secretary of SCOF (Buddhist rep)


.....
(Sikh rep)


.....
(Jewish rep)


.....
(Christian rep)


.....
(Muslim rep)

Dated: 2nd July 2017