

“Commissioning faith groups to provide services can save money and strengthen a community...”

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## FAITHFUL PROVIDERS

Jonathan Birdwell



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## Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Demos Inquiry into Faith, Community and Society	9
Summary	11
1 Introduction	17
2 Faithful service providers	27
3 From service to social justice	45
Appendix: Case study organisations	51
Notes	57
References	63



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As always, all errors and omissions remain my own.

Jonathan Birdwell  
January 2013



# Demos' Inquiry into Faith, Community and Society

This report is part of a larger project, the Demos Inquiry into Faith, Community and Society, led by Stephen Timms MP and Demos exploring the role of faith in UK society and politics. It is the second in a series of three reports that are being released in 2012 and 2013.

This report explores the contribution of faith groups to their local communities in four key policy areas. It also explores the possible benefits and potential drawbacks of commissioning faith groups to provide public services.

In order to advise on the direction and content of the research we have convened an advisory committee of faith leaders, academics and politicians knowledgeable on the issues covered by our research. This committee is chaired by Stephen Timms MP and consists of the following members:

- Stephen Timms MP (Chair)
- Akeela Ahmed (Muslim Youth Helpline)
- Rosie Bairwal (Catholic Association for Racial Justice)
- Hazel Blears MP (Labour MP, Salford)
- Steve Bonnick
- Sir Trevor Chinn
- Alison Coutts (Bill Hill Trust)
- Unmesh Desai (Labour Councillor, Newham)
- Mustafa Field (Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, MINAB)
- Andy Flanagan (Christian Socialists)
- Lord Maurice Glasman (Labour Peer, Stoke Newington and Stamford Hill)
- Siobhan McAndrew (University of Manchester, British Religion in Numbers programme)
- Jasbir Panesar (University of East London)

Vikas Pota (Sewa Day)

Nick Spencer (Theos)

Rev Lucy Winkett (vicar, St James's Church, Piccadilly)

## Summary

In *Faithful Citizens*, we argued that people of faith are likely to be a vital base of support for any future election-winning progressive coalition.<sup>1</sup> Religious citizens were more likely to volunteer, to be compassionate towards immigrants and to value equality over freedom. This report argues that faith-motivated service providers are committed and passionate advocates for reducing social and economic inequality and protecting the most vulnerable – two key social justice concerns of progressives.

The positive role of voluntarism in civil society, and specifically the involvement of faith groups within it, has been cited by figures across the political spectrum. While some faith groups are keen to receive greater recognition for their community contribution, many are also wary of being expected to do too much at a time when their resources are under strain.

This report explores the role of faith groups in providing services voluntarily and through the receipt of public money across four key policy areas: employment and training, services to young people, integration and cohesion, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. It is based on a comprehensive review of previous research as well as 20 case studies of faithful providers currently operating in the UK.

We found little evidence to confirm critics' fears about faith group service providers: that their main motivation is proselytising, they are exclusivist and they discriminate. Rather, faithful providers are highly motivated and effective, and often serve as the permanent and persistent pillars of community action within local communities.

## The faith service ethos

Faith appears to be an effective motivator for community service providers, akin to the notion of a public sector ethos. Faithful providers are motivated by their desire to ‘live their faith’ and ‘love thy neighbour’, which often leads them to volunteer their time, work long hours for less pay, and persevere over the challenges they encounter in working with the most vulnerable.

## Effective providers, not proselytisers

Our research found no evidence of aggressive proselytising among faith-based providers, and many provided services to community members of different faiths and no faith. Those who worked with young people and vulnerable groups were acutely aware of the need to be inclusive, keep religion ‘in the background’ and not abuse the power imbalance between service provider and user. While some organisations spoke about hiring members of their own faith exclusively as employees, we argue that this practice is not discriminatory. The provision in the Equalities Act that allows for such hiring practices – contingent on their adoption being integral to the ethos of the organisation – is the correct approach.

## Faithful community pillars

Faith groups and institutions are key to community organising because they provide permanent structures in their communities with significant capital and motivation to address social problems. Faith communities can also provide access to hard-to-reach groups in a way that many other organisations cannot. However, policy areas that seek to engage faith groups are sometimes driven by short-term interests that can leave faithful providers disillusioned and fatigued.

## Recommendations: from service to social justice

Our research was not extensive enough to be representative of all faith-based providers, but it does suggest some

recommendations for faith-based organisations receiving public money to provide services:

- Faith-motivated providers – and their financial supporters – should prioritise the maintenance of their underlying ethos and motivation at the expense of increasing the size and scale of their service provision.
- Commissioners of public services should require, or at least strongly encourage, faith-based providers to work with organisations of different faiths to tackle local area problems they share, for example, around unemployment and drugs and alcohol. This could help to achieve policy objectives (eg carrying out youth work or employment training services) while assisting cohesion as a by-product. At the very least, local authorities should aim to provide a coordination function to ensure that organisations from different faiths are not delivering duplicate services, and encourage them to work together to increase effectiveness.
- Local authorities should undertake a ‘faith and service audit’ of their local communities to identify areas of further collaboration between different faith groups. One example of this is Barnet Council’s ‘Faithbook’. This local ‘mapping’ could assist in measuring the value of voluntary faith-based provision, commissioning small-scale service providers that can provide social value and finding areas of synergy in which different faith groups can be encouraged to deliver services in conjunction.
- Government, local authorities and other funders should not be squeamish about the religious aspect of faith-motivated service providers: the majority do not appear to proselytise aggressively in the context of service delivery. Nor should they demand that faith-based providers not proselytise at all. The act of ‘proselytising’ is highly varied and subtle. Aggressive proselytising – such as making services contingent on attending religious instruction – should be severely discouraged. However, assuming that there is a plurality of service providers, there should be nothing wrong with service providers openly discussing their faith, particularly to those service users who are interested in learning more and/or open to a spiritual element.

- Faith-motivated organisations should be supported in providing services where a ‘holistic’ approach appears to be particularly effective, for example, in abstinence-based drug and rehabilitation programmes. In this context, we take a ‘holistic’ approach to entail the involvement of a ‘spiritual’, ‘moral’ or ‘ethical’ element.
- Faith-based providers need to be more fully integrated into the Government’s Work Programme and drug and alcohol strategies. These privilege large private companies such as G4S and Serco. While it is expected that these companies will subcontract work to smaller providers, we saw no evidence that small-scale faith-based providers which were highly effective were being incorporated into these policy initiatives and implementation frameworks.
- Even in an era of fiscal austerity, efficiency should not be the sole measure of which organisations are commissioned or supported to provide services to local communities. Government, local authorities and other funders should consider additional *social* values when commissioning public service providers. These could include:
  - history and longevity of an organisation or institution in a local area
  - quantity and quality of personal relationships between the organisation and the target service users of an area (eg through surveys about preference and name recognition)
  - long-term future plans of the service provider for their continued presence in the local area (similar to the concept of ‘legacy’ in the Olympics)
  - community activities outside the service provided
  - number of employees in the organisation from the local area
  - local community users’ preference
  - cumulative investment in the local area by the organisation, over time, including but not limited to the type of service that is being commissioned.
- While a number of different types of organisations could score well on these additional measures of ‘social value’, our research suggests that this is also true of many faith-based service providers. The intrinsic and selfless ethos of faith-motivated

providers, the connection they provide with the past and the local area, their cultural and moral framework, and the permanence of faith institutions suggests that faith-based service providers contribute additional social value that should be considered by the Government and local authority commissioners.

- Following the example and work of Citizens UK, progressives should seek to work with social justice-minded faith groups and institutions as community organisers addressing the roots of social justice problems, rather than being mere service providers. One of the most high profile examples in recent years was the London Citizens campaign for the living wage, in which faith groups and faith institutions throughout London demonstrated hugely significant organisational capacities and moral authority.



# 1 Introduction

Faith groups have a long history of providing services that often the most vulnerable members of the public rely on. In the UK, the Church provided services that we now assume to be the domain of the state, including education, social care and support for those in poverty. William Beveridge wrote in *Voluntary Action*:

*The making of a good society depends not on the State but on citizens, acting individually or in free association with one another, acting on motives of various kind – some selfish, others unselfish, some narrow and material, others inspired by love of man and love of God.<sup>2</sup>*

Across the UK, faith groups continue to provide valuable services to their local communities through volunteering their time, money and community assets. Examples of such activities include providing support for the vulnerable and homeless, working with young people, relationship counselling, and drugs and alcohol counselling. Some evidence (cited below) suggests that faith groups and institutions can be particularly effective at providing these services.

Very few people can argue or criticise faith groups for doing this work through their own initiative, with their own resources. The problem and potential controversy comes when government and local authorities start providing faith groups with public money to provide these services.

This chapter sets out some context of faith-based service provision in the UK. The first section provides a brief history of government initiatives over the last decade to increase the involvement of faith-based organisations in providing services. We then present some of the criticisms made against faith-based service providers, as well as past evidence about their effectiveness and the costs they save the state.

## The Labour years

According to some academics, the personal faith of leading members of the New Labour project – including Tony Blair and Gordon Brown – played an important role in the Labour Government’s initiatives to foster greater involvement of faith groups in policy objectives.<sup>3</sup>

In 2004, the report *Working Together*,<sup>4</sup> a summary of a Home Office report on cooperation between government and faith communities, outlined a series of grants to encourage and enable faith communities ‘to play a fuller part in civil society and community cohesion’.<sup>5</sup> Several government departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), focused on this aim in the years that followed.

The most active department was the DCLG, which created the Race, Cohesion and Faith Directorate, which provides funding to the Inter Faith Network and previously sponsored the Faith Communities Consultative Council (successor to the Home Office working group that published *Working Together*; it was discontinued by the Coalition Government). The DCLG commissioned the Community Development Fund (CDF), a non-departmental public body that runs and administers the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, with the aim of strengthening the capacity of faith and interfaith organisations.<sup>6</sup> The fund distributed £11 million to over 900 groups over two years (2007/08–2008/09) and sponsored faith work that aimed to improve community cohesion in England and Wales.<sup>7</sup> Much of this work and engagement has been spurred by concerns over a lack of community cohesion and the rise of extremism in the UK following the 7 July 2005 bombings. The DCLG also established the Faith and Social Cohesion Unit (situated within the Charity Commission) to work with and support religious charities to strengthen their governance and accountability, and to help them respond to the challenge of tackling extremism.<sup>8</sup>

Two key objectives of these initiatives were to get different faith groups working together, and to strengthen links between faith organisations and other civil society organisations. In 2008, the DCLG published *Face to Face and Side by Side*,<sup>9</sup> announcing a three-year, £7.5 million programme of investment and support

designed to foster greater partnership working across and between faith groups.

Meanwhile, Faith Action, the Church Urban Fund and nine regional faith forums aimed to build faith-based organisations' capacity for delivering public services. In March 2010 the DCLG published 'myth busting' advice to commissioners on working with faith groups, designed to 'ensure that there is a level playing field' and aimed to encourage commissioners to see faith-based groups as potential recipients of public service contracts.<sup>10</sup>

Faith Action was a £4.4 million grant programme for voluntary and community sector groups and organisations in England to carry out interfaith work. The programme, which ran from April 2009 to 31 March 2011, funded 575 projects and continues to operate with the support of the Department of Health.<sup>11</sup> According to one report, the programme contributed to a greater alignment of faith groups and the voluntary charity sector (VCS): 78 per cent of projects were carried out by the VCS or charities, with a further 17 per cent led by faith-based groups.<sup>12</sup> In total, 338 people benefited from each locally funded project and nearly 200,000 people have benefited across the whole grant programme.

The Labour Government also invested £1.9 million over a period of three years to build the capacity of nine regional faith forums. Each forum received up to £70,000 per year for three years (2008/09–2010/11). The programme's aims were to support increased opportunities for dialogue and social action at the regional and local level, and to strengthen relationships and partnerships between the faith sector and civil society. An evaluation by the CDF found that the regional faith forums helped link the faith sector and civil society in a unique way, which enabled wider statutory agency engagement with the faith sector.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these initiatives, some argue that this welcoming tone was not accompanied by an actual increase in the role of faith groups in the delivery of public services under New Labour. A Joseph Rowntree Foundation report in 2003 found that the sense of goodwill towards faith groups in rhetoric was not being matched by policy.<sup>14</sup> The findings of the Charity Commission's

Faith Groups Programme, which aimed to gauge the views of faith groups so as to find the best ways to support and regulate them, supported this view. Of the 800 representatives surveyed, common concerns included discomfort at the secular language and goal-based model of the Commission.<sup>15</sup> A 2008 report by the Communities and Local Government Agency revealed that although 64 per cent of faith groups interviewed found their relationship with government to be positive, there was still a common feeling that the Government was resisting engaging with the faith sector.<sup>16</sup>

### Faith and the Coalition Government

The idea of engaging faith groups in the delivery of public services has played a prominent role in the rhetoric of the Conservatives in coalition as a part of the broader goals of the Government's 'Big Society' ambition.

Ministers' speeches and statements have continually praised the role of faith groups in areas where they are traditionally deemed important. A 2012 DCLG report on integration specifically highlighted the work of the Church Urban Fund's Near Neighbours programme and the Anne Frank Trust in fighting against stereotypes and prejudice, and fostering integration.<sup>17</sup> According to the Communities Secretary Eric Pickles, the Near Neighbours programme 'will provide up to £5,000 for small-scale, grass-roots projects designed to bring people together from different backgrounds: perhaps through sport, art, or community action – maybe clearing up a local park or estate'.<sup>18</sup>

The Coalition has also promoted the idea of engaging faith groups in the delivery of a broader range of public services. Education remains the policy area where faith-based organisations (faith schools) continue to play a significant role. A freedom of information request from 2010 found that one-third of maintained schools (those receiving public funds) in England are faith schools.<sup>19</sup> The issue of faith schools continues to divide opinion. Some argue that faith schools are inherently divisive and increase social segregation.<sup>20</sup> The Education Secretary

Michael Gove, among others, has strongly defended faith schools – citing their high levels of attainment – and encouraged more faith groups to set up academies.<sup>21</sup>

The Coalition Government has also stressed the importance of interfaith dialogue and social action, as opposed to single faith groups providing services to their followers. In July 2010, the DCLG issued a press release entitled ‘Keeping faith in the Big Society’ in which Communities Minister Andrew Stunell said:

*Faith communities make a vital contribution to national life, guiding the moral outlook of many, inspiring great numbers of people to public service, providing succour to those in need. They are helping to bind together local communities and improve relations at a time when the siren call of extremism has never been louder... Inter faith activity is more important than ever in our work towards the Big Society, so I want to push for more inter faith dialogue and action rather than individual faith groups delivering social projects.*<sup>22</sup>

Some faith leaders have expressed reservations about engagement with the so-called Big Society agenda in evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Public Administration’s report on the Big Society.<sup>23</sup> In one example, the Bishop of Leicester stressed the limits of the Church of England’s capacity to deliver public services stating that churches

*cannot be an alternative to public service provision.... They cannot deliver the professionalism, they cannot deliver the resources, they cannot deliver the standards, they cannot deliver the consistency, and they should not be expected to. But what they can do is add value, they can mobilise volunteers, they can support initiatives, and in localities they can do things that are small and transformational.*<sup>24</sup>

### Critics of faith-based providers

Despite the encouraging rhetoric from politicians, there remain vociferous critics and sceptics about the role of faith groups in delivering public services. They range from the cautious to the

downright hostile, and offer an assortment of criticisms and concerns that merit consideration.

First, it is argued that faith-based organisations are at greater risk than secular organisations of being discriminatory towards their employees and service users, or overzealous in their proselytising, at the very worst, making the receipt of services contingent on participation in religious services. Derek McAuley, chief officer of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, told the Public Administration Select Committee that he had concerns: ‘Some religious groups... could pursue policies and practices that result in discrimination against marginalised groups, particularly in service provision and the employment of staff.’ In particular, he suggested that people who were in an unmarried relationship or divorced, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered could find themselves subject to discrimination.<sup>25</sup>

For example, World Vision, an international Christian charity that focuses on humanitarian work, claims that ‘staff commitment to core Christian beliefs... is essential for maintaining our Christian identity’. It defends this by drawing a parallel with other organisations, such as those working for animal rights or climate change, which would be unlikely to hire an avid hunter or climate sceptic.<sup>26</sup>

One of the most well-known debates in this context pertains to the right of faith groups to exempt themselves from the Equalities Act of 2010. The act makes it unlawful in the provision of services to discriminate against people with certain protected characteristics, such as ethnicity and race, or sexual orientation. However, according to Rosie Chapman, Director of Policy at the Charity Commission,

*The law recognises that some charities are set up to help particular groups in society because of disadvantage or for clear social objectives. It therefore specifically allows charities in these circumstances to depart from the principle and the Commission’s guidance summarises the position for charities.*<sup>27</sup>

One of the more high-profile examples of faith groups coming up against the Equalities Act are the continued appeals

from Catholic Care, an adoption charity based in Leeds, to gain permission to discriminate against same-sex couples. While an exemption was denied (because it was deemed as ‘not for the public benefit’), others have been upheld in certain circumstances. For instance, in August 2011 two Roman Catholic nurses won the right not to work in an abortion clinic after they accused the NHS of breaching equality laws. Tim Ross, formerly religious affairs editor of the *Telegraph*, has written that this is the first case in ‘which the Equality Act has been used successfully to defend a “pro-life” position as a philosophical belief and could have implications for other Christian medical staff’.<sup>28</sup>

At the very least, some in the community who need access to services might be put off by the fact that the local provider of that service is religious or of a religion that they are unfamiliar with and thus feel uncomfortable engaging with.

On its website, the British Humanist Association (BHA) declares:

*We believe that the problems associated with having religious organisations as public service suppliers and providers are so varied and so great, that it is our firm view that no publicly-funded, comprehensive and statutory public service, to which all citizens have an entitlement, should be contracted out to a religious organisation until the law has been changed to protect service users and employees from discrimination.*<sup>29</sup>

The BHA argues that religious organisations should no longer be exempt from the Equalities Act 2010 and other equality regulations relating to religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Another criticism of faith-based service providers is that they inevitably lose the virtues that make them so valuable in the first place – their volunteers, as well as their religious motivation – as they are forced to conform to a secular commissioning process. For example, John-Paul King cautioned against faith groups taking public money in a recent *Guardian* Comment is Free article, arguing that larger faith-based organisations offer little in the way of extra benefit (compared with their secular counterparts). Instead, he argues, the value of faith-based

organisations comes from them remaining free from the obligations and restrictions of government money, and doing work on a smaller scale with their own social capital of volunteers and motivated paid staff.<sup>30</sup>

A third argument is directed primarily at faith schools, and contends that the state should not be promoting religion and that young people in particular should receive a uniform and balanced education rather than one heavily slanted towards one religion. In 2005, Chief Schools Inspector David Bell said:

*I worry that many young people are being educated in faith-based schools, with little appreciation of their wider responsibilities and obligations to British society. This growth in faith schools needs to be carefully but sensitively monitored by government to ensure that pupils receive an understanding of not only their own faith but of other faiths and the wider tenets of British society.*<sup>31</sup>

### Just how valuable are faith groups in providing services?

One important consideration in light of such criticisms is the question of empirical demonstration of value. Are faith-based organisations particularly good at delivering public services, thus strengthening the argument for their inclusion? For this report, we reviewed the available evidence on this question, much of which is inconclusive. It is clear from a body of research – including our report *Faithful Citizens* – that religious citizens are more likely to volunteer their time and money than their secular counterparts. However, the value of this contribution – and the cost it saves the government – is difficult to quantify. At present there is no national empirical survey of the contribution of volunteer hours to the cost effectiveness of faith groups. This would be difficult to accomplish for several reasons, including the huge number and range of organisations, and the fact that volunteer hours are usually not ‘clocked’ in the way that employment hours are.

There are a few regional and local studies that have attempted to estimate the worth of faith group volunteer hours.

A 2003 study from the East of England Faiths Council, Faith in the East of England, estimated that the value of faith community volunteer work to the region was around £30 million per annum.<sup>32</sup> In the north west, a 2005 report by the Northwest Regional Development Agency found that volunteers in the region contributed around 8.1 million volunteer hours per annum, the equivalent of 4,815 full time jobs, valued at between £61 million and £65 million a year.<sup>33</sup> A report by Gweini (the Council for the Christian Voluntary Sector in Wales) on the contribution of faith groups in Wales found that 42,000 volunteers provide just under 80,000 volunteer hours a week – equivalent to 2,000 full-time workers – at an estimated value of £43.8 million, assuming that these services are provided at the average hourly wage rate in Wales of £11.57, 48 weeks a year.<sup>34</sup>

However, as pointed out above, some faith-based organisations may lose their ability to recruit volunteers as they become commissioned public service providers. Our review was unable to uncover solid evidence about whether this was in fact the case, though there are a number of anecdotes that suggest that it is. Nor were we able to find evidence about the extra value of large faith-motivated service providers compared with their secular counterparts which have been commissioned by government or local authorities. A report by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) argued that there has been a tendency to exaggerate how much stored capital faith groups have and can deliver to public services. However, it emphasises the cost effectiveness of faith groups in precluding the need to access such services, and to complement the work of the state rather than act as its instrument.<sup>35</sup>



## 2 Faithful service providers

In this chapter we present findings from our research on 20 different case studies of faith-motivated service providers across four policy areas: employment and training; work with young people; integration and community cohesion; and drugs and alcohol rehabilitation. These policy areas were chosen because of their current saliency, and claims about the particular effectiveness of faith-based service providers. Before presenting our findings under three broad categories, we first provide some background to the four policy areas we chose.

### Policy areas

#### Employment and training

Almost all religious institutions see providing support for the most vulnerable in society as a key objective, and their work in this area is well known. Most religious institutions also recognise the value of productive work and employment to provide meaning and structure in people's lives – idleness being the devil's plaything, as the saying goes. Vulnerable individuals in society often need the basics (shelter and food), but eventually the path to stability and a meaningful life requires finding employment. The role of faith groups in helping citizens into employment has been less well noted. Given this lack of attention, as well as the Government's ambitious Work Programme, we've chosen to focus on the contribution of faith groups to this policy area.

We interviewed employees at five organisations that currently provide (or at one point provided) some form of employment support broadly conceived. The organisations include Christians Against Poverty, the St Saviour's Community Centre in Folkestone, SPEAR Hammersmith, Faith Regen and

City Gateway. Not all of these organisations are specifically faith-motivated – for example, St Saviour’s Community Centre is completely distinct from St Saviour’s Church, although it is based in the Church’s building and receives other direct and indirect (moral) support. Moreover, not all of these organisations provide standard employment-based services, such as job clubs and CV workshops. For example, Christians Against Poverty focuses on teaching the broader life skills, including debt advice and management – but also the life skills that often act as significant barriers to employment. All of the organisations are connected to faith or a faith institution in one way or another, and are working on initiatives that deal with helping people to move from welfare to work.

### Youth work

In the Demos report *Faithful Citizens* we found that those who belonged to a ‘church or religious organisation’ in the UK were particularly active in volunteering for ‘youth work’ compared with their secular counterparts and religious and non-religious citizens across Europe. With rising youth unemployment and cuts to youth services, faith groups may be called on increasingly to provide services for young people.

Youth unemployment in the UK has reached nearly 20 per cent – bringing the total of young people out of work to approximately 1 million. At the same time, across England, youth services have been hit by government-imposed public spending cuts. According to the Confederation of Heads of Young People’s Services, by April 2011, over £100 million had been cut from local authority youth services, including children’s services, libraries and youth clubs.<sup>36</sup> Combined with the trebling of university tuition fees and the cutting of the Educational Maintenance Allowance, these cuts to youth services are creating a difficult climate and short-term future for young people. The extent to which the Big Society – including faith groups – can step in to plug these gaps is up for debate.

For this report we interviewed faith-based groups providing advice and guidance, employment training, education and

mentoring and sports activities. In addition to SPEAR Hammersmith and City Gateway (which work primarily with young people) mentioned above, the organisations we interviewed included the Muslim Youth Helpline, Newham Youth for Christ, World Sports Ministries, Ambassadors in Sport and the East London Mosque. The Muslim Youth Helpline was established in 2004 and aims to provide culturally and religiously sensitive peer support to young British Muslims. World Sports Ministries and Ambassadors in Sport are international ‘youth-ministry’ organisations that seek to use sport to help disadvantaged young people and expose them to Christian teachings; for this report we focused on their work in the borough of Newham in east London. The East London Mosque is one of the oldest and largest mosques in the UK, and has the largest array of community services. These include primary and secondary schools, as well as mentoring and academic support in addition to other activities.

### Integration and community cohesion

The integration of existing immigrant communities and community cohesion between different communities has been important and vexing policy areas in the UK for at least the past 15 years. The 2001 riots in the towns of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, and the attacks of 7 July 2005, provoked increasing concerns about white and minority ethnic and religious groups (especially Muslims) leading segregated lives and being mutually suspicious of one another. There was also a greatly increased concern that a small minority of young British Muslims could be drawn into supporting the al Qaeda ideology and potentially becoming involved in plotting an attack against their fellow Britons. Owing to the self-expressed religious motivation of many of these home-grown ‘terrorists’, faith leaders and groups were considered to be particularly well placed to assist with the Government’s Prevent agenda, which aimed to prevent radicalisation. While many groups have worked on this policy area, the response in general from community stakeholders was one of resistance to the Government’s Prevent Strategy, which

many argued demonised and stigmatised all British Muslims as potential supporters of the al Qaeda ideology.

We interviewed representatives from the Near Neighbours programme, the Christian Muslim Forum, Building Bridges in Pendle, the Gujarat Hindu Society and the London Buddhist Centre in Tower Hamlets. The Near Neighbours Programme was started by the Archbishop's Council and the Church Urban Fund in order to encourage the church to give funding for programmes that benefit communities, and is now supported in part by the DCLG. The Christian Muslim Forum was formally launched in 2006 to create a bilateral forum bringing together various strands and denominations of Christianity and Islam in England. Building Bridges in Pendle was established in the 1980s by local volunteers and focuses on community-based cohesion, integration and education work. The Gujarat Hindu Society in Preston has existed as a religious and community centre for approximately 40–50 years, while the London Buddhist Centre has existed in east London since 1978 and provides meditation classes for those with depression and addiction issues.

### Drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Drug and alcohol addiction continues to blight UK communities and damage families and individuals. The National Treatment Agency and the Government estimate that the annual cost to society of drug addiction is £15.4 billion, while the cost of alcohol-related harm is estimated at £21 billion.<sup>37</sup> There are currently an estimated 306,000 crack and heroin users in England.<sup>38</sup> The current Government's Drugs Strategy, published in 2010, has placed greater emphasis on abstinence-based recovery programmes.<sup>39</sup>

Evidence from the USA suggests that faith-based recovery programmes can be particularly effective across diverse populations. There are 23 studies that acknowledge benefits as a result of participation in faith-based programmes, ranging from reducing the homicide rate among youth and the recidivism rate among prisoners, to increasing self-confidence among high-risk youth and enhancing the attitudes, behaviour and lifestyle of

drug addicts.<sup>40</sup> Individuals who attend spiritually-based support programmes, such as the 12-step programmes of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, in addition to receiving treatment, are more likely to maintain sobriety.

We conducted profiles of four faith-based rehab providers in the UK: the Caleb project in Bradford, Kenward Trust, Spacious Places and Yeldall Manor. All of these organisations provide abstinence-based recovery programmes (some community-based and others residential), with the majority operating on a small scale. The Caleb Project, a community-based programme, was part of St John's Bowling Church in Bradford and ran for three years before coming to an end in 2010. They worked with an estimated 60 individuals a year with a success rate of 25 per cent. The Kenward Trust is a residential-based programme in Maidstone, Kent, that services approximately 150 people every year. Spacious Places is the only faith-based, 12-step abstinence programme in Leeds, with capacity to support approximately 30 service users in a year. Yeldall Manor refers to itself as a centre for 'rehabilitation through Christian discipleship'.

## Research findings

Based on a review of previous research, and interviews with representatives from the organisations described above, we present our research findings under three broad themes. We argue the following:

- Faith provides a unique underpinning to the commitment and motivation required to provide services to the most vulnerable and difficult to reach in society.
- Faith-based service providers can be highly and uniquely effective in some policy areas, and are mainly motivated by the needs of the community rather than a desire to proselytise.
- Faith groups and institutions provide valuable and important 'permanent structures' within local communities that make them well placed to aid in addressing social problems.

### The faith service ethos

One of the most consistent findings to emerge across the case studies was the importance of faith as the personal motivation of employees and volunteers working for faith-based service providers. Many faith groups and religious individuals are motivated to 'live their faith' by making sacrifices and working tirelessly to help those less fortunate in their community. For some, this work is motivated to spread the word of the religion in which they fervently believe. But these organisations appear to be in the minority. The majority, it seems, are motivated simply to help those less fortunate – citing core religious teachings and examples set by Jesus or Muhammad – without concerns or overt efforts at 'converting the masses'.

Therefore, our research suggests that in the context of public service provision, faith can provide a selfless motivation that is akin to the notion of a public sector ethos. Traditionally, it has been understood that factors that motivate workers in the public sector are intrinsically different from those informing private sector workers (see box 1). Public sector reforms over the last 25 years, especially those relating to contracting work, have been viewed as a danger to this shared ethos.<sup>41</sup>

Box 1      *Traditionally, the public sector ethos has been viewed as embodying five key principles:*

- *public interest – concern with serving the 'public good'*
- *motivation – altruistic as opposed to self-interest or profit-based forms of motivation*
- *loyalty – complex levels of loyalty: institutional, departmental, professional and community*
- *bureaucratic behaviour – honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity*
- *accountability – accepting the legitimacy of the political structure and standing aside personal views to implement policy*

*Source: Hebson, Grimshaw and Marchington, 'PPPs and the changing public sector ethos'<sup>42</sup>*

Many employees of faith organisations felt that faith provides a depth of motivation and strength of commitment that is unique. According to Jo Rice, Executive Director of the Resurgo Trust and the SPEAR Hammersmith programme, faith plays an essential role in underpinning the motivation of staff: 'it provides the hope that keeps us going, and the belief that positive change is possible' even in the face of significant obstacles and frustrations. All of SPEAR's employees are Christian, and are motivated by a belief that God's purpose is to make the world better – and that that is their duty as well ('we are loving them into a better place'). The same was specifically said of the employees at Newham Youth for Christ, Christians Against Poverty, Yeldall Manor and Kenward Trust.

Others spoke of their faith motivating them to work long hours for little, and in some cases no, pay. Mark Blythe, the coordinator for Ambassadors in Sport in Newham, was previously paid in his role in the organisation until the funding was cut. Blythe says his faith motivated him to continue doing the job even without payment: 'If I live by my faith – and I think this is what God wants me to do – then He provides for, though it has been a real test of faith... but ultimately it has made it stronger.' Jimmy Dale of Newham Youth for Christ felt that secular organisations often see their job as a nine-to-five one then switch off at the end of the day whereas 'in faith organisations, the guys doing youth work in particular have dedicated themselves to it'. He stresses that statutory, secular organisations play an important role but that 'there [isn't] a lot of time given over to developing young people' in those organisations, contrasting it with his faith-based group. Jo Rice of SPEAR Hammersmith also argued that the faith motivation has allowed the organisation to recruit staff to a highly qualified team, who are spurred by their faith and willing to work for less money – despite the concerns of some funders that a preference for Christian employees would narrow the employee recruitment pool and lead to less well-qualified staff.

In the words of CEO Eddie Stride, City Gateway wants to 'bring hope to the community... and demonstrate God's love in a practical way'. The organisation was started by a group of

workers from the City who were affiliated with a local church, and were concerned about the poverty and lack of skills in the area. The organisation is based on what Stride describes as a Christian ethos – although they do not highlight the underlying faith motivation too prominently. Stride believes that the Christian ethos is essential to the success of the organisation, and the drive and motivation of its employees, although it has a diverse staff of approximately 140 people with various views about faith. But according to Stride, all the employees in some way embody the core idea of the underlying ethos – which is being selfless and passionate about helping those less fortunate than they are. Stride feels that the ethos keeps the organisation focused on doing what’s important – providing a high quality service to those who need it most: ‘Process is just as important as outcome.’ Stride is keen to note that while secular organisations can still be strongly motivated to help those in need, he sees the faith motivation as integral. Stride also contrasts the staff at City Gateway with those in the private sector, whose primary motivation is money. ‘There can be really good secular organisations, just as there can be really bad religious organisations... but for us the religious ethos is incredibly important.’

Matt Barlow of Christians Against Poverty thinks there is a risk of diluting the faith commitment when being commissioned to provide public service delivery. Instead, the Government and local authorities need to allow faith-based organisations to recruit within their own ethos and this will actually create stronger and more effective organisations: ‘For CAP, retaining the ethos of the organisation is more important than massive numbers of service users and delivery.’ The representative we spoke to from Yeldall Manor also noted that the faith ethos was important: ‘We believe it to be helpful,’ she said.

### Effective providers, not proselytisers

Critics argue that faith-based organisations are at greater risk of being discriminatory towards their employees and service users, or overzealous in their proselytising. Among the case studies that we undertook, we did not find any evidence of excessive or

aggressive proselytising among faith-based providers. Many provided services to community members of different faiths and no faith. Those who worked with young and vulnerable people were acutely aware of the need to be inclusive, keep religion ‘in the background’ and not abuse the power imbalance between service provider and user. Moreover, faith-motivated organisations appeared to be particularly effective service providers in a number of areas.

The overwhelming majority of case study organisations emphasised strict rules about non-proselytising. This was true in organisations that were more up front about their faith motivation and their religion, as well as others that kept their faith in the background and had multi-faith and no-faith employees.

For example, Christians Against Poverty said that faith was only articulated through service delivery if it was appropriate (eg for service users who are Christian). Matt Barlow, CEO of Christians Against Poverty, said that it was important for them that Christianity is mentioned in the name of the organisation for two reasons: so people will know what kind of organisation it is, and because of the importance of Christianity to the organisation’s mission. As mentioned above, SPEAR Hammersmith – which works primarily with 16–24-year-olds – is also made up of all Christian staff who are motivated by a firm belief that God’s purpose, and their duty as Christians, is to make the world better. But nonetheless, they maintain a strict policy of non-proselytising. Yeldall Manor has clients of other faiths and no faith as well. The representative we spoke to from Yeldall Manor said:

*We are very open at the interview stage of what the programme entails. We are open to people of any faith or none; it is up to them whether they take or leave the Christian element of the programme.*

According to Mark Blythe, the Newham coordinator of Ambassadors in Sport, religion is not discussed openly with young people because the organisation is sensitive and conscious of the vulnerability of the young people they work with. Blythe said that the only time religion is spoken about more openly is

when the programme is run in the church – then and only then is there more open ‘values-led’ engagement.

The faith element for the Muslim Youth Helpline is embodied in the commitment of the volunteers and the time they give, not in the religious advice or guidance directly given.

Eddie Stride of City Gateway is not shy about discussing his personal religious story and faith with everyone the organisation works with, from young apprentices to businesses and government ministers. However, Stride emphasises that he would never take or encourage one of the young people to go to church because of what he cites as an unavoidable power imbalance when you’re working with young people. Jimmy Dale of Newham Youth for Christ has a similar view on an overt focus on religion:

*As far as young people go, it’s not massively important. Those that hold Christian faith themselves find the faith side more important but for young people who come from other faiths or none, it’s just a lovely youth group and somewhere where they can belong.*

In the drugs and alcohol rehabilitation field, it appears as if there has been a shift in recent years away from proselytising and making services contingent on compulsory attendance of religious services. One organisation, Yeldall Manor, maintains a focus on religion, and attendance of collective worship and bible study are part of the programme; however, as noted above, these elements are not compulsory.

According to Audrey Pie, a worker at Kenward Trust, the organisation was ‘strongly evangelical’ at first and only changed recently in order to abide by rules around inclusivity and be able to appeal to a wider range of people. Now, Pie says that the religious aspect of the work of the trust is available to everyone – and some people are gently encouraged to explore Christianity, but ‘it is not forced on them’. For those who are interested, Kenward Trust has a link with the local vicar who offers them a ‘kind of intro to Christianity’ – but Pie is keen to stress that this is very much separate from the rehab programme. In the past – when the organisation was more evangelical – participants were

required to attend a weekly church service. Pie thinks that all faith-based drugs and alcohol programmes have shifted to being more inclusive, and have dropped attendance of faith services. Part of this shift is down to the requirements of funders. The funding for Kenward Trust generally comes through social services, for whom inclusiveness is a big concern ('it always comes down to inclusiveness...'). According to Pie, 'some staff would probably like to go further in encouraging Christianity, but they have to do what is required and abide by the principle of inclusiveness'.

The same was also true of drug and alcohol providers Spacious Places and the former Caleb Project based in Bradford. According to Graham Fell, Spacious Places is definitely not an 'evangelical charity' whose aim is to convert their service users: 'We are not here to convert or get you to church... our sole goal is recovery.' Similarly, Rev. Howard Astin of the Caleb Project said that despite many of the staff being religious (some of them ex-addicts and newfound Christians), the organisation wasn't overly Christian – but instead faith 'sort of existed in the background'.

Moreover, faith-based organisations appear particularly effective at delivering some services, such as drugs and alcohol rehabilitation. The Compassion Capital Fund, run by the US Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, acknowledged in 2002 that faith-based organisations are uniquely situated to service vulnerable populations such as impoverished families, prisoners in their rehabilitation and reintegration processes, children of prisoners, homeless individuals and high-risk youth.<sup>43</sup>

According to Howard Astin of the Caleb Project, the faith or spiritual element is essential and more effective because 'problems with addiction are usually rooted in deeper problems'. Graham Fell of Spacious Places said that in their feedback service users say that Spacious Places is different from other rehab providers because of the small size and thus the ability to develop a strong bond and relationship between staff and service users – which Fell thinks is integral to recovery.

Liz Carnelly of the Near Neighbours programme sees a number of benefits of faith-based organisations. They:

*bring values of hope and compassion, and look at people in a holistic manner – they see the whole person – and are not solely concerned with just doing the job or whatever agenda they are responsible for [as some public service organisations are].*

One example of a religious institution providing a holistic approach is the London Buddhist Centre, which runs a course called Breathing Spaces, which employs ‘mindfulness’ and meditation techniques to help with mental health and addiction issues.

According to Matt Barlow of Christians Against Poverty, critics of faith-based service providers lack

*understanding about how positive an influence faith can be in someone’s life. There’s been a loss of understanding about the richness that faith can bring to society. In Bradford, I recognise the good that comes from my neighbours’ Muslim faith, despite it not being the same as what I believe.*

Similarly, Jimmy Dale of Newham Youth for Christ has noted that ‘some people assume that because you’re a Christian organisation, anybody with a negative experience of Christians will tar you with the same brush’ and bemoans the view held by some that all Christians hold the same viewpoint, when in reality Christianity is a broad church of differing opinions.

### Faithful community pillars

Most faith-led service provision takes place in local communities on a small scale. Every organisation we interviewed – from City Gateway to East London Mosque to Building Bridges in Pendle to a range of organisations in Newham, including Newham Youth for Christ, Ambassadors in Sport and London Citizens – had deep roots in their local communities. The Gujarat Hindu Society in Preston has been operating for approximately 40–50 years, while the East London Mosque is the oldest mosque in the UK. The London Buddhist Centre has been based in the same abandoned fire station in east London since 1978, while Yeldall Manor was founded in 1977. Governments often tend to adopt a

‘year zero’ approach to policy, creating new organisations and new initiatives without due regard to the importance of longevity and the consistency of local organisations and initiatives.

Almost all the faith-based organisations whose representatives we spoke to grew out of work with a local church or mosque, and often had employees who were from the local area. For example, the Caleb Project in Bradford started out as a ‘low key church hall lunch sort of thing’ in response to youth work undertaken by St John’s Bowling Church. Newham Youth for Christ grew out of a desire of local churches to provide youth work. City Gateway has a strong and passionate connection with the local area: CEO Eddie Stride grew up in the area and still lives there, while approximately 25 per cent of staff members are apprentices from the local area. The East London Mosque has provided services to the local Muslim community for almost 100 years, starting with the first Muslim-sensitive funeral and burial service in London.

According to Emmanuel Gotora of TELCO and London Citizens, who has worked extensively with faith groups in east London and Newham, faith groups and institutions are key to community organising because they provide permanent structures in their communities with significant capital and motivation to address social problems.

Liz Carnelly of the Near Neighbours programme believes that one of the key values of faith-based service providers is that they are embedded in their communities, and ‘not just outsiders coming in to tell them what to do’. This makes them particularly effective in reaching so-called ‘hard-to-reach’ groups in need of services around finding work, addressing debt, community cohesion and integration, and drugs and alcohol rehab. For Faith Regen – a charity that works across different faith communities and primarily with black and minority ethnic communities that share issues around worklessness – it was felt that the role of faith in the organisation was less as an underlying motivator, but instead more practical: faith groups and institutions are particularly effective at providing access to those in need of services.

Faith institutions also provide community assets such as buildings and volunteers. The majority of our case studies

highlight the integral role of both types of assets in local service delivery. For example, the St Saviour Community Centre provides employment services from its office in the local church building and is heavily dependent on an ‘excellent’ group of 20 volunteers. The Gujarat Hindu Society funds its activities through a social enterprise whereby it lets rooms in its building for local businesses and activities. Faith Regen relies heavily on local faith institutions providing access to buildings and spaces.

Despite this enduring permanence, short-term interests sometimes drive many policy initiatives that seek to engage faith groups, particularly in the area of community cohesion.

According to representatives from the Christian Muslim Forum, the key challenge they face is the number of cuts to services, and the often temporal nature of projects coupled with high expectations to deliver. Moreover, funding is often tied to various agendas that are sporadically supported and changed often – they described this as ‘mission drift’ – which engenders feelings of fatigue and undercuts motivations of people to engage in these issues.

There was also scepticism and suspicion among those we spoke to as to the true underlying motivation for government and local authorities funding cohesion work – the Government’s Prevent counter terrorism strategy. The Muslim Youth Helpline had received funding from Prevent, which led to some criticism and controversy from their service users and others in the community. The helpline no longer receives Prevent funding, but staff argue that while they are opposed to Prevent – and the decision to accept the money was much debated within the organisation – they believed that the service they were providing was extremely valuable and thus it didn’t matter where the funding came from.

As Liz Carnelly of Near Neighbours programme and Julian Bond of the Christian Muslim Forum argue, greater attention needs to be paid to developing long-term strategies that involve and engage faith groups in local communities. While some charities come and go depending on needs and policy priorities, faith institutions provide long-term pillars in their communities. According to Bhikhu Patel of the Gujarat Hindu Society in

Preston, there is a building or place of worship for every single major religion within 200 metres of each other. While they all attend local activities and festivals and generally get along OK, there is not much engagement across different faiths.

According to Bob McDonald of Building Bridges, there are often a number of misconceptions within communities about interfaith work, for example, that it requires compromising the integrity of one's faith. Liz Carnelly said that the most difficult thing about interfaith initiatives was getting people to step out of their comfort zone and think that there is a value to engaging with others – and this applies within a single faith let alone across different faith groups. Carnelly notes that the work is often easier in London, because of the high levels of diversity, but is much more difficult in highly segregated communities like in the north west – with some notable suggestions, for example Building Bridges in Burnley.

One successful interfaith operation has been Faithbook, set up and run by Barnet Borough Council. It was established with funding from other groups such as youth-based service provider Connexions. The Local Government Association has referred to Faithbook as a way for support networks to develop and is cited as a positive example of the collaboration between local government and faith groups.<sup>44</sup> The Faithbook website includes a directory of activities going on throughout the borough provided by religious organisations. The motivation behind this aspect of the site came from the fact that 'young people had no one place to go to find out what was available in their area'.<sup>45</sup> The desire to 'build positive opportunities for young people' is considered one of the main motivations for the setting up of the directory.<sup>46</sup> What makes this remarkable is that it is focused on faith-based activities, and this has, at least partially, been motivated by a desire to create positive interaction between communities.

Barnet Council refers to its borough as multicultural and Faithbook provides information on the numerous multi-faith activities that go on in the borough. The recognition that the population is not religiously homogenous and therefore requires a level of education about other faiths is one of the motivations of the current use of Faithbook. Providing this

information, alongside details of faith-based and multi-faith activities, can be seen as a way to ensure positive interaction between communities.

One approach to better harness the fixity and benefits of faith institutions is a shift from interfaith work that is primarily dialogue-based to more social-action type projects. This shift is already occurring, according to Carnelly and Bob McDonald of Building Bridges in Pendle, but it's still in its early days. Near Neighbours makes a distinction between 'social action' on the one hand, and 'social interaction' on the other: while the former is the ultimate goal, 'sometimes you need social interaction before they will come together for social action'. Nonetheless, McDonald sees a significant need for work that attempts to break down the segregation and polarisation that exists between communities in the north west in particular, and believes that the most effective way is to inspire them to tackle local social issues jointly.

While many in faith-based organisations spoke about good relationships with funders, including the Government and local authorities, those in other organisations described funders as wary and hostile about the religious aspect of service organisations. The experience of the Christian Muslim Forum is that funders of all kinds – from Government, local authorities to grant-making trusts (with the exception of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) are hesitant to fund projects or organisations that involve faith. As a result, the Christian Muslim Forum often treads a line between diluting the religious aspect of their work without losing vision, principles and credibility. Newham Youth for Christ has found that some projects involving schools have been cancelled because of the organisation's Christian affiliation, despite the lack of overt Christianity in the projects.

Moreover, commissioning processes tend to favour big service providers, rather than local faith-motivated providers. According to Graham Fell of Spacious Places, applying for statutory funding is 'very difficult' and generally aimed at big providers ('there [are] myriad application forms to wade through'... but 'you can't franchise the heart'). Nonetheless, he has been working to develop local partnerships in order to

improve chances of receiving statutory funding. In contrast, Carnelly notes that many local authorities are very good at engaging with faith groups, but that there is sometimes the perception that faith groups are cheap, and/or willing to do what is difficult without additional support.



### 3 From service to social justice

While merely skimming the surface of faith-based provision in the UK, our case studies allow us to draw a number of conclusions about faith-based service provision. Some of these recommendations are meant to provoke debate, and would require further research to substantiate their viability as well as potential unintended consequences.

Our recommendations pertain to the issue of faith-based organisations being provided with public funding to deliver public services, by either government or local authorities. As mentioned in the introduction, nearly all faith-based service provision is voluntary – based on the money, toil and effort of faithful citizens and institutions themselves, without receiving public money. There is little we can say about these activities, except that they are extremely important to local communities, and that faith groups that are especially active should be commended.

It is worth saying, however, that while this is the so-called Big Society at work, resources are just as tight for faith institutions across the country as they are for the Government, which cannot assume that faith institutions will be able to step in where services are cut, even if they are motivated to do so by the needs of the community and their concern for the vulnerable in society. At the same time, government and local authorities should continue to consider commissioning faith groups to provide public services, in line with the recommendations we make below.

#### Maintain the faith ethos

Our research suggests that faith provides a strong motivating ethos for service providers across a range of policy areas. Yet there appears to be a tension between this ethos and the size and

funding arrangements of faith-based service providers. Faith-motivated providers – and their financial supporters – should prioritise the maintenance of their underlying ethos and motivation at the expense of increasing the size and scale of their service provision. Commissioners should not just assume that if a service is successful and well run, it should inevitably be scaled up. Part of the service's success may be down to the faith ethos, which appears to become diluted the larger and more mainstream a service-providing organisation becomes.

### Work together towards shared goals

Different faith groups in the UK are united by the faith service ethos, but also local area social problems around unemployment and drugs and alcohol. In the area of community cohesion, organisations and institutions of different faiths need to be strongly encouraged to work together in the context of local social action projects. Many people in the sector have spoken about a new shift in interfaith work from dialogue to more social-action-based activities. This strategy should underpin all interfaith work in the UK.

There should also be greater consideration as to whether faithful service providers that receive public funding should be required to work in conjunction with other local groups of a different faith. This could help to achieve policy objectives (eg doing youth work or employment training services) while assisting cohesion as a by-product. However, when working on their own is integral to the ethos of a faith group, they should be able to be exempt from this requirement, as they are from the provisions of the Equalities Act and employment law (bearing in mind the right of the commissioner to take this exemption into consideration when awarding a contract). At the very least, local authorities should aim to provide a coordination function to ensure that organisations from different faiths are not providing duplicate services, and encourage them to work together to increase effectiveness.

To facilitate this, local authorities should be encouraged to undertake a ‘faith and service audit’ of their local communities to identify areas of further collaboration between different faith groups. One example of this is Barnet Council’s local Faithbook model, discussed in the previous chapter. There have been some national-level efforts to map the service provision activities of faith-based organisations – most notably the Faith Based Regeneration Network. Local ‘mapping’ by local authorities could be more effective at measuring the value of voluntary faith-based provision (in order to fill gaps left by public sector cuts), commissioning small-scale service providers that can provide social value and find areas of synergy in which different faith groups can be encouraged to deliver services in conjunction (and thereby achieving community cohesion and interfaith work as a by-product).

### Freedom to proselytise

The Government, local authorities and other funders must not be squeamish or anxious about the faith aspect of faith-motivated service providers: it appears that the majority do not proselytise in an aggressive manner in the context of service delivery. Going further, nor should they demand that faith-based providers not proselytise at all. Critics inevitably cite concerns around proselytising as a reason not to support faith-based providers. The reality is that the concept and act of proselytising is highly varied and subtle. Aggressive proselytising – such as making services contingent on attending religious instruction – should be highly discouraged, but assuming that there is a plurality of service providers, there should be nothing wrong with service providers openly discussing their faith, particularly to those service users who are interested in learning more and/or open to a spiritual element. We should welcome and encourage a plurality of service provider types, and that should not exclude faith-based providers that are open about their faith, motivation and desire (to some extent) to spread their beliefs.

## The social value of faith providers

Funders should be less squeamish about faith-based providers, and in some instances faith-motivated providers should be strongly considered over private sector providers because of their permanence and importance to local communities. Even in an era of fiscal austerity, efficiency should not be the sole measure of which organisations are commissioned or supported to provide services to local communities. Government, local authorities and other funders should consider additional *social* values when commissioning public service providers. Some examples of social value that could be considered by service commissioners include:

- history and longevity of an organisation or institution in a local area
- quantity and quality of personal relationships between the organisation and the target service users of an area (eg through surveys about preference and name recognition)
- long-term future plans of the service provider for their continued presence in the local area (similar to the concept of 'legacy' in the Olympics)
- community activities outside the service provided
- number of employees in the organisation from the local area
- local community users' preference
- cumulative investment in the local area by the organisation, over time, including but not limited to the type of service that is being commissioned

While a number of different types of organisations could score well on these additional measures of social value, our research suggests that this is also true of many faith-based service providers. The intrinsic and selfless ethos of faith-motivated providers, the connection they provide with the past, their cultural and moral framework, and the permanence of faith institutions suggest that there are additional value-based reasons for supporting faith-based service providers.

At present, public service commissioning heavily favours very large companies and charities. There is a need to redress this imbalance in favour of small-scale locally based communities; progressives and traditional conservatives should support this

principle in the same way they support ‘mom and pop’ local shops against the likes of big commercial chains like Tesco, Sainsbury and Starbucks, which homogenise communities.

The emphasis on the relationship between service users and providers – which appears to be better within the context of small-scale faith-based provision, rather than large-scale private providers – should be given greater consideration in the commissioning process. Quoting Eddie Stride of City Gateway again, ‘Process is just as important as outcome.’

### Consider faith-based providers where effective

Faith-motivated organisations should be supported in providing services where a holistic or spiritual approach appears to be particularly effective – for example, in abstinence-based drug and rehabilitation programmes. Government and local authorities should approach supporting faith groups in the context of a long-term strategy, rather than short-term initiatives. Faith-based providers need to be more fully integrated into the Government’s Work Programme and drug and alcohol strategies. Our research suggests that small-scale faith-based providers are operating on the edges of these programmes. In the case of the Work Programme, faith-based providers often receive referrals from the big private providers, without accompanying funding, and without being fully linked in with the Government’s strategy. Examples of best practice need to be more effectively shared between the larger private sector providers and the smaller faith-based and other charity organisations. Moreover, most people we spoke to had not yet seen a shift to abstinence-based programmes in the commissioning process for drugs and alcohol rehabilitation, despite the Government’s rhetoric.

## From service to social justice

According to some experts, many faith-based organisations

*can be regarded as engaging in a form of resistance to neoliberalism, bringing alternative theo-ethics and geographies of care performatively into being in a society where government has lost touch with the practical and emotional needs of local communities.*<sup>47</sup>

Following the example and work of Citizens UK, progressives should seek to work with social-justice-minded faith groups and institutions as community organisers addressing the roots of social justice problems, rather than being mere service providers. There are a number of national faith-based charities that are highly successful and effective as advocates on a wide range of social justice issues. Organisations like Christian Aid, Church Action on Poverty, the Church Urban Fund and Tearfund are incredibly effective advocates on social justice issues. Progressive politicians – secular and religious – should seek to work with and support these organisations, and encourage local faith-based service providers to work in support of advocacy. Successful campaigns – such as Make Poverty History and the Jubilee Campaign – had their origins in faith-based organisations. One of the most high profile examples in recent years was the London Citizens campaign for the living wage, in which faith groups and institutions throughout London demonstrated hugely significant organisational capacities and moral authority.

## Appendix: Case study organisations

*Ambassadors in Sport (AIS)* was founded in 1990 in Bolton, England, to ‘partner with churches and Christian groups to develop grass roots football ministry’. Every Friday evening they hold five-a-side football matches with young people to prevent engagement with gangs. AIS provides the kit and referee, and anywhere between 30 and 50 participate every week.

*Building Bridges* in Pendle began in the 1980s started by local volunteers to focus on community-based cohesion, integration and education work, and has operated as a limited liability company since the 1990s. It tends to receive funding for specific projects, and has received funding from Pendle Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and the Church Urban Fund.

*The Caleb Project* was a drugs and alcohol rehabilitation programme based in Bradford that ran for 13 years but came to an end in 2010. The Caleb Project adopted the 12-step approach and a community (as opposed to residential) rehab centre with programmes lasting up to a year. The programme was abstinence-based.

*The Christian Muslim Forum* was initiated by the Archbishop of Canterbury (who is the organisation’s patron) to create a bilateral forum bringing together various strands and denominations of Christianity and Islam in England. The national organisation was formally launched in 2006 and its aim is to provide a variety of activities for the community and public, family, youth and women, and work on educational, international and media issues.

*Christians Against Poverty* (CAP) provides face-to-face support on issues related to debt and financial management. Staff describe their work as more holistic than this, however, as debt issues often require broader life changes. They help around 500 new families every month, and estimate that a small proportion of service users are Christian (between 10 per cent and 20 per cent), approximately 2–3 per cent are from other faiths and the rest are not religious.

*City Gateway* is based in Tower Hamlets and provides skills training courses for young people and women in the borough with the goal of moving them into employment. It also provides apprenticeships to young people and runs a number of social enterprises that help provide services and resources to City Gateway and the wider community.

*East London Mosque* is the oldest and largest mosque in the UK. It has a rich history of providing services to local Muslims, beginning with the provision of a Muslim funeral and burial service. It provides a wide range of services, many of which focus on young people. The mosque also runs a primary and a secondary school, London East Academy.

*Faith Regen* is a charity based in London that works across different faith communities and primarily with black and minority ethnic communities that share issues around worklessness, poor skills and literacy, and lack of qualifications. It was founded in 2001 and originally funded by the Government with the aim of fostering cohesion while delivering employability training at the same time.

*The Gujurat Hindu Society* is based in Preston, and has existed for approximately 40–50 years. According to Bhikhu Patel, the main purpose of the society is to ‘provide spiritual guidance to their community’. One of the key activities promoting interfaith and community work is visiting schools and holding open days at the centre to explain the Hindu faith and culture. The society also

participates in any local activities that other groups are participating in, for example faith forums, and black and minority ethnic groups.

The *Kenward Trust* is a residential, abstinence-based organisation founded in 1968 and based in Maidstone, Kent. It was founded by a wealthy Christian couple, Ray and Violet Sindon, who sold their farm and moved into the Kenward Estate to provide care for homeless men with drug and alcohol addiction. According to Audrey Pie, a worker at Kenward Trust, the organisation was 'strongly evangelical' at first and only changed its stance recently in order to abide by rules around inclusivity and to be able to appeal to a wider range of people. The Kenward Trust has 50 staff and approximately 150 people attend the rehab each year.

*London Buddhist Centre* (LBC) has been based in east London since 1978. According to its website ([www.lbc.org.uk/about4.htm](http://www.lbc.org.uk/about4.htm)), 'the LBC teaches meditation and Buddhism in a way that is relevant to contemporary western life'. The LBC offers courses focusing on meditation for beginners to more advanced practitioners. It works in schools to teach about meditation and Buddhism, and offers drop-in evenings and events for young people (under the age of 35) that focus on a Buddhist approach to a number of life issues including sexual relationships, family and enlightenment, work and money.

*London Citizens* is the London branch of Citizens UK, an organisation that focuses on encouraging and facilitating community organising. The founding chapter was the East London Communities Organisation (TELCO). It has worked extensively with faith groups, institutions and organisations in the borough of Newham on issues such as the living wage.

*The Muslim Youth Helpline* (MYH) was founded by Mohammed Mamdani in August 2001 when he was 18 to provide a peer-support service to young British Muslims. MYH ran a year-long pilot scheme, and the service received 400 calls in the first six

months. Following the pilot programme, the service was officially launched in December 2002.

The *Near Neighbours Programme* was started by the Archbishop Council and the Church Urban Fund in order to encourage the church to give funding for programmes that benefit communities. Their three key areas of work include faith leader training programmes, providing support to community groups, and a young leader-training programme aimed at 18–30-year-olds. The programme has four locations in the UK: Birmingham, Bradford, east London and Leicester.

*Newham Youth for Christ* was originally set up through an Anglican Church taking on student youth workers from university to take placement courses and run programmes for local young people. The main aims are to equip and empower local churches to offer provision for young people, to reach out to young people about faith through programmes such as school-based mentoring, to promote joined-up youth work across the borough, and to create a strong support network of Christian youth workers.

*Spacious Places* is a community day (rather than residential) treatment centre based in Leeds. The organisation has existed for five years, but has only been ‘properly off the ground for three and a half years’. According to Graham Fell, Spacious Places is a Christian organisation – all of its trustees and staff are Christians – and the only drug and alcohol service in Leeds based on the 12-step abstinence programme.

*SPEAR Hammersmith* was founded by Tom Jackson through his work with St Paul’s Church in Hammersmith. SPEAR provides a ‘free’ and ‘interactive’ six-week course for unemployed young people to help develop interview techniques, confidence and better communication skills among other core skills.

*St Saviour's Community Centre* (SSCC) is based in Folkestone, Kent, housed in a church building. SSC is described by its sole employee as an 'outreach arm of the church', but is otherwise completely separate. In addition to the one paid staff member, SSCC depends on an 'excellent' group of 20 volunteers at any given time. They see approximately 30 people per week, and have helped 31 people into full-time employment since January 2011.

*World Sports Ministries* (WSM) was founded by Grant Sheppard in the UK in 1999. Its mission is to use the medium of sport to proselytise and recruit people to Christianity who are often difficult to reach. Specifically, WSM helps churches establish community sports teams. Branches of WSM have been established in countries outside the UK, and in Bristol, Bath and Newham.

*Yeldall Manor* is a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Reading, which was started in 1977. According to its constitution it provides rehabilitation through 'Christian discipleship', but offers a broad range of programmes that do not include Christian elements. Staff treat approximately 20 individuals at any given time, and about 50–60 per year.



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In the Open Public Services White Paper, the Government declared their intention to make public services more open, transparent and efficient by bringing in outside providers. From employment training to drug rehabilitation, an increasing number of services once delivered by the public sector have been outsourced through the commissioning of private sector and charitable organisations. Yet faith-based providers have seen little uplift in opportunity, often being overlooked due to local authorities' fears that they might discriminate or proselytise to service users.

*Faithful Providers* argues that local authorities stand to benefit both financially and through improved community relations if religious groups are brought into service delivery. The report investigates 20 faith-motivated organisations across a variety of policy areas, finding little evidence to justify fears over aggressive preaching. Faith is an important part in the lives of staff and volunteers, but it does not adversely impact on their service provision, instead leading some volunteers to go the extra mile. In fact, faith-based providers are especially effective in areas like drugs and alcohol rehabilitation, where a 'holistic' approach is valuable.

The report also argues that, if religious groups in receipt of public money are required to work with organisations of other faiths when delivering services, the result could be improved integration, a greater sense of community and stronger local institutions. Local authorities should cease to view commissioning as purely an economic decision, and instead consider the added social value that charitable and faith providers bring.

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