

Faith Builds Community: Working together in Barking and Dagenham

**“A better connected, faith friendly borough,
where people of all backgrounds feel safe,
celebrated and included”**

We will do this by ensuring;

- That the invaluable contribution faith communities make to the borough is realised and amplified
- That faith-based needs are understood and met
- That faith-based organisations, including the Barking & Dagenham Faith Forum, are leading voices with platforms to represent their communities.

Celebrating faith based social action

Responding to hate crime and prejudice

Accessing space and buildings

Safeguarding vulnerable people

Respecting different faiths

Faiths working together

Promoting diverse voices

“Above all the genius of this document is that it is pragmatic in setting guidelines for how the Council and Faith groups can better work together to transform our borough into one in which everyone’s voice is heard and reflected in the vision and activities of our wonderful Borough. To this we in the Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum subscribe.”

Bishop Trevor Mwamba
Chair, Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum, Vicar of St Margaret’s Church, Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Chelmsford



“This collaboratively designed policy is a first of its kind. It is our commitment to unite and foster good relationships, to enjoy a prosperous partnership with the faith community, which positively benefits them, the Council and residents.”

Councillor Saima Ashraf
Deputy Leader of Barking & Dagenham Council and Cabinet Member for Community Leadership & Engagement



Themes, Priorities and Action Plan

Faith Builds Community' was collaboratively designed with faith communities and is the shared ambition and commitment of Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum, in partnership with faith communities and the Council. At the heart of the Faith Builds Community Policy is the need to reinforce the contribution of faith communities in our borough and focus on both the contribution and the challenges that we face.

The themes of the policy and priorities, as discovered through extensive consultation and analysis of feedback, are summarised here, alongside the proposed actions:

Celebrating faith based social action

The Council and faith groups should work together to raise the profile of faith-based social action and convene spaces for collaboration and learning.

Actions	
Faith-based organisations will:	Continue to invite Council staff to social action projects and events, to showcase their work. Utilise internal / external funding sources and the Barking and Dagenham crowdfunding platform to deliver projects in the community. The Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum (B&D Faith Forum) will continue to help promote social action delivered by faith-based organisations.
The Council will:	Continue to support this work, by enabling strong relationship building, celebrating and supporting local initiatives, convening shared learning opportunities and identifying innovative ways to raise awareness and profile. Support the work of the B&D Faith Forum, by continuing to designate a lead officer to attend and support meetings.
Others will:	Businesses and press will promote some social action projects and events of benefit to their stakeholders.

Responding to hate crime and prejudice

The Council and faith groups should work together to improve residents' knowledge of how to identify and report race and faith related hate crimes.

Actions	
Faith-based organisations will:	Continue to educate their communities on recognising all forms of hate crime, how to report them, and signposting to support, while nominating a member to be the first point of contact for individuals who are victims of hate crime. Follow our duty to ensure that vulnerable people are safeguarded from harm.
The Council will:	The council is resolute in its conviction that no resident should be the victim of prejudice, hate crime or hate related incidents. Therefore, the council and its partners, will seek to work with nominated individuals within the faith community to build confidence in hate crime reporting. Through our support of national initiatives and local training, we will ensure that communities are continuously educated on the support available. We will also ensure that local conversations are convened with our partners, to explore the handling of hate crime incidents and why underreporting is a significant issue.
Others will:	The police and other reporting bodies will visit faithbased organisations, build relationships and work with local communities to ensure their services in relation to hate crime are fit for purpose and accessible.

Accessing space and buildings

The Council and faith groups should work together to ensure that where possible there is sufficient space for residents of different faiths to worship and practice their faith, as well as to work together to ensure policies are fair and transparent and are followed by all.

Actions	
Faith-based organisations will:	Continue to; follow the terms of their lease, adhere to all minimum health and safety standards and regulations for buildings, as well as following the Good Neighbour Guide, promoting sensible parking following the local rules and regulations, work with the Council to resolve issues and prioritise engagement with the wider community Continue to support other faith-based organisations and members of the community by considering providing / sharing space for community activities, meetings and parking.
The Council will:	Remain committed to ensuring it works with faith-based organisations to help explore opportunities to access appropriate available premises or hire spaces for events wherever possible. Seek to work with faith-based organisations, to resolve issues when the terms of their lease (if using Council buildings), or duties from the Good Neighbour Guide are not being met including health and safety on site. Work to improve transparency on the rate relief policy and where significant building development is taking place, include faith-based organisations and the B&D Faith Forum in consultation. This will be further developed through actions developed through the Local Plan, supplementary planning guidance and our statutory planning powers over the next 12 months.
Others will:	Businesses and voluntary sector organisations will consider providing / sharing space for activities, meetings and parking.

Safeguarding vulnerable people

The Council and faith groups should work together to safeguard vulnerable people of different faiths, including co-creating and delivering appropriate strategies for particular issues that affect LBDD residents.

Actions	
Faith-based organisations will:	Create and maintain a Safeguarding Policy for children and vulnerable adults relevant to their organisation and designate a Safeguarding Lead, who should participate in online or in person training from approved providers and monitor DBS requirements. Follow charity commission guidance to protect people you work with and ensure trustees understand their legal duties around protecting people.
The Council will:	Follow our duty to ensure that vulnerable people are safeguarded from harm. Provide training for faith leaders and safeguarding leads within faith-based organisations. The council's safeguarding team, will support faith-based organisations with their safeguarding needs and training, including by developing a free downloadable pack with templates that can be used. Explore the option of setting up a 'Safeguarding self-assessment process' for local groups.
Others will:	The police and other reporting bodies will work with faith-based organisations to ensure their services in relation to safeguarding are fit for purpose and accessible. They will ensure that there are effective ways of communicating concerns with how reporting is dealt with.

Respecting different faiths

The Council and faith groups should work together to improve their understanding of different faith communities and should work together in a spirit of respect and ongoing learning.

Actions	
Faith-based organisations will:	Work together to; enhance an attitude of respect among faith communities, educate the wider community about the diversity of traditions, beliefs and practices in the borough; and resolve challenges by building relationships, participating in shared community events and jointly utilising funding opportunities to highlight faith.
The Council will:	Continue to support, champion and connect with the activities of the B&D Faith Forum. Give faith due consideration, alongside all other protected characteristics, when designing and planning events and services, to ensure that faith-based access requirements are taken into account. Continue to support community events that highlight the value of faith locally and create opportunities for conversations at the intersection of faith and other strands of identity for those who want them.
Others will:	Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) will offer Interfaith Awareness Training, Schools workshops and Faith Inclusion Training in the borough to faith-based and non-faith organisations, businesses, schools and selected parties. Residents will be offered the opportunity to participate in publically promoted events of B&D Faith Forum.

Faiths working together

The Council and faith groups should work together to provide opportunities for residents of different faith backgrounds to meet and learn about each other, enabling further collaboration and improved understanding among groups.

Actions	
Faith-based organisations will:	Work together to promote educational faith events, the shared social action projects of the B&D Faith Forum, support National Interfaith Week by holding relevant events and including residents by publicly celebrating faith in their own community. The B&D Faith Forum will work to ensure meetings are promoted and visible, and that they maintain a diverse board of trustees. Council-led community cohesion funds are available, to help build relationships with local community.
The Council will:	Continue to support the capacity building work currently being undertaken in the borough by the F&BF. The council will additionally ensure that a nominated point of contact supports faith-based organisations, maintains a consistent level of engagement, and that the relationship between the council and Faith Forum continues to flourish.
Others will:	F&BF will design faith-inclusive arts-based workshops, in collaboration with Studio 3 Arts and local artists, and promote spaces where people of different faiths can come together, such as residential experiences for young adults.

Link to the full policy:
www.bdfaithforum.org.uk/faith-policy

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Promoting diverse voices

The Council and faith groups should work together to ensure faith groups are fairly represented in borough events and programming across the year.

Actions	
Faith-based organisations will:	Engage with Council-led events and encourage their communities to get involved. The B&D Faith Forum will offer feedback on Council-led events they attend, particularly when there are barriers to participation for people of faith or a lack of representation of different faiths and cultures.
The Council will:	The council will ensure that it engages with faith-based organisations, faith leaders, the B&D Faith Forum and others, to improve the diversity of events. We will continue to mark faith-based festivals and celebrations throughout the year, with a renewed focus on underrepresented groups and create opportunities for different faith and community groups to partner with us on the delivery of them.
Others will:	Some voluntary sector organisations will attend meetings of the B&D Faith Forum to promote their projects and events, and to seek out partnerships with faith-based organisations

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