

West Midlands

Violence Reduction Partnership

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# TOOLKIT FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

**EQUIPPING, ENABLING AND EMPOWERING**



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**West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership**

Compiled by members of the Violence Reduction Partnership, including

Nadyia Hussain

Fred Kratt

Dr Jo Peden

Ummul Humayra

Rosie Pugh

Jade Hibbert

Zeba Chowdhury

Bethan Lonsdale

Jason Davies

Marinda Boyal

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In several locations throughout the document, the text has either been adapted or used verbatim from the source and referenced accordingly.

# AUTHORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS





# FOREWORD

## WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

I welcome the Violence Reduction Partnership Toolkit for Faith Communities as an important contribution to the prevention and reduction of violence in the West Midlands. Faith groups contribute so much to society, in so many different ways.

I recognise that and want to ensure that we maximise the potential of faith communities to prevent and reduce violence – whether that be, for example, by providing resilience for young people, utilising the resource of volunteering or making community assets available.

As a People and Communities Police and Crime Commissioner, I am keen to engage with, listen to and work with the diverse faith groups of the West Midlands, in a collaborative way, implementing the principles set out in this Toolkit.

The Faith Alliance illustrates that, whether from the same or different backgrounds, we must all work together collectively if we are to be able to prevent and reduce violence, protect people, and in particular our young people, make a difference and save lives.

We all have a responsibility to prevent and reduce violence. The learning set out in this Toolkit will enable us to do exactly that. I commend the Faith Alliance for the leadership it has shown through the preparation of the Toolkit.

**Simon Foster**  
West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

## FAITH ALLIANCE CO-CHAIRS

We count it an honour to write this Foreword for the Faith Alliance Toolkit.

We acknowledge that many faith organisations are situated in the most deprived areas of the city and the country. It is in these areas and neighbourhoods where there is much good pastoral and material support work offered by faith groups. This ranges from youth clubs, community advocacy, food banks and lunch clubs to informal education, counselling and leadership training.

In recent years, we have seen the increase in faith-based approaches in partnership working. These partnerships offer support and solutions regarding social and community cohesion. They respond to concerns around the impact of criminality, weapons-related incidents and serious violence. These include support around fatalities and devastated families. We have seen faith groups and leaders actively involved in supporting and comforting families and wider communities during times of devastation and grief.

We acknowledge that violence, criminality and harming people go against the essence of our values, morals and teachings of our faiths. Some communities and neighbourhoods still suffer the effects of serious youth violence that can so easily and spontaneously erupt with violent and harmful results.

In 2017, the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner produced the Commission on Gangs and Violence Report: Uniting to Improve Safety Report (Anderson, 2017), which showed what faith groups and leaders can do to prevent and reduce crime and violence in the city. The inception of the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (WMVRP) and the work of the Commission on Gangs and Violence led to an active partnership of faith groups and leaders that resulted in the establishment of the Faith Alliance.

As the Faith Alliance continues working, we are encouraged by the contributions, ideas and insights it offers. It really champions community-led/involved and faith-based responses to violence prevention and reduction. We have seen the willingness of faith leaders alongside other partners to work together to share best practice, network and support each other on the violence prevention and reduction journey. This includes several work streams that involve faith, statutory, community and voluntary sectors and interweave the public health and faith-based approaches to violence reduction.

Over the past two years or so, we have seen faith institutions and groups respond to the COVID-19 crisis in pioneering and courageous ways. They have stepped in where others falter or 'fear to tread' and shown an ability to reach people and communities that others can't because they are trusted. These

groups understand people's spiritual concerns as well as their material needs and offer support to all, whether or not an individual or family embraces faith.

Coupled with our volunteers, our faith centres and our grassroots support, the Faith Alliance has a responsibility to leverage our resources and assets to help change our communities for the better and reduce violence.

So, if you're not part of the Faith Alliance, we encourage you to get on board.

**Revd Dr Carver Anderson**  
Executive Director - Bringing Hope Charity

**Kamran Hussain**  
CEO – Green Lane Mosque and Community Centre



# INTRODUCTION

**The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”**

*WHO, Violence Prevention Alliance*



Violence is devastating for individuals, families and communities. From fights after school or outside pubs on Saturday nights; to coercive control and domestic abuse; or criminal and sexual exploitation, it causes immeasurable pain, suffering and, in the worst cases, costs lives. Young people and children are particularly vulnerable.

In contrast to other crime types, violence has been rising in recent years. This is a worrying trend. It is important to turn the tide. This is possible. Violence is not inevitable. It can be prevented.

For the best chance of reducing violence, a joined-up, preventative approach is needed. No single agency is able to resolve the challenge alone; we cannot police ourselves out of violent crime. Rather, a challenge of this complexity requires statutory agencies to work alongside a wide range of voluntary organisations and communities to first understand the root causes of violence, and then to tackle them together. This is typically referred to as a ‘public health approach’, which we will return to later.

### Why a Faith Toolkit?

This Toolkit, published by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, is among the first of its kind to recognise and showcase the huge potential that faith communities bring to the multi-agency task of reducing serious youth violence. Faith communities have been helping to interrupt and prevent violence for generations, but often in isolation from local authorities and each other. This Toolkit champions a joined-up, multi-faith approach to violence reduction that recognises the so far largely ‘untapped’ value of the many spiritual, ethical, moral and social perspectives that faith communities hold and practise. It is written with faith leaders particularly in mind, but is of use to others with different roles and responsibilities.

All individuals and communities, including faith communities, have a responsibility to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults in society. No faith community is unaffected by violence and its devastating direct and indirect consequences. Many faiths, as we shall see, teach that upholding the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk is not just a duty, but is even an act of worship. In response to these teachings, many faith communities are joining a movement to help prevent violence, but are saying that they lack the know-how, experience or confidence to address this issue.

This Toolkit is designed to help meet that need by equipping, enabling and empowering communities of all faiths and none, in the West Midlands and beyond, to better understand and prevent serious youth violence. It will also help faith communities to recognise the resources, strengths and assets they already have and how these can be better mobilised in the service of young people. **Our key message is that everyone has a role to play, whatever your age, your faith or your past. Not everyone will be able to do everything, but you can do something.**

This Toolkit is extensive, but it is not exhaustive; there is much good work we had to omit for reasons of space. We also don’t claim to have all the answers, we are always open to learning from our partners and communities and exploring new ways to prevent violence.

Please note that some of the topics discussed in this Toolkit will be distressing for some readers as a result of their lived experience of trauma and adversity. We recommend that you seek appropriate help for any distress that may arise. You can find a range of support services and call-lines here: [www.the-waitingroom.org](http://www.the-waitingroom.org)



## The structure of the Toolkit

### This Toolkit is made up of five sections:

- Section 1: The challenge we face

This section introduces the problem of rising serious youth violence. It then describes the ideas behind the 'public health approach' to violence reduction. Next, the role of faith communities in helping to prevent violence is introduced. Lastly, the public health and faith-based approaches are combined through a description of the work of the Faith Alliance in the West Midlands.

- Section 2: Why should I respond?

This section encourages the reader to take a moment to reflect on the issues through common values and from their particular faith position, if they hold one. This section concludes with the 'Declaration of Hope' as a call to action.

- Section 3: What does this mean for me?

This section identifies a range of recommended actions for different readers, depending on their capacity and responsibilities in a faith community. Each of these recommendations is graded from 'first steps' through to 'advanced'.

- Section 4: How can we make a difference?

This section serves as a library of good practice from different faith-based projects in the West Midlands and beyond. The wide variety of case studies given are designed to inspire readers, show what is possible, and demonstrate the impact that faith communities are able to make.

- Section 5: Staying equipped

This final section provides further suggested reading, resources and sources of ongoing support in order to stay equipped in the fast-moving violence reduction landscape.

### Where should I start?

While this Toolkit can be read from cover to cover, we recommend that readers begin at the most relevant section for them. It is also completely acceptable to dip in and out of the Toolkit according to what you need. Below are some suggestions of where you could begin, depending on your experience.

- Section 1 - if you're new to the work of violence reduction.
- Sections 1 and 2 - if you are a professional who understands the public health approach but would like to know more about the role of faith communities.
- Section 3 - if you are a member of a faith community, understand the issues behind youth violence and would like ideas about how to help reduce it.
- Section 4 - if you are a faith-based leader, experienced in working with young people and vulnerable adults, and would like to gather best practice and take inspiration from others.



# SECTION 1:

## The challenge we face

### What are the challenges of growing up as a young person today?

'People – as I don't know who to trust. School just makes things more difficult and make things a big deal. Social media – as it's a way of stirring things up and causes arguments and lies.'

'Social media - how they perceive themselves: the body, hair, skin how big or skinny they are; money; relationships; needing to belong; lack of role models; bullying; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; physical abuse; social abuse; neglect; peer pressure... Young people are influenced by the wrong type of people in social media, TV, music. It's all about drugs and gang violence and this is what young people are listening and seeing and think it's ok.'

'Having to look a certain way. Social media. Boys.'

#### Quotes from young people



## 1. THE PROBLEM OF RISING SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE

Tragically, serious youth violence has been rising for a number of years. In response, the Home Office launched the £100 million Serious Violence Fund in 2019, which provided a boost of funding to police forces across England and Wales. It also provided funds to establish a network of 20 Violence Reduction Units (VRPs) in parts of the country with the highest incidence of serious youth violence. The VRPs were tasked with reducing rates of youth violence by adopting a 'public health approach' and working closely with the communities and young people most affected by violence.

Before we explore how serious youth violence can be addressed and ultimately prevented, it is necessary to better understand what serious youth violence is.

### Characteristics

Colleagues at the Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) in Wales describe youth violence as:

'a traumatic experience that can have lifelong health and social consequences. It is often connected to other forms of violence, including child abuse and neglect, sexual violence, self-harm and suicide.' (Wales VPU).

This definition is broad enough to acknowledge that youth violence can include the 'knife crime' that is often reported in the media, but also many other forms of harm [see box]. It also introduces the way that youth violence is connected with the key ideas of trauma and childhood adversity which we will return to later.

### 1. Types of youth violence

- + **Bullying:** Unwanted and aggressive behaviour that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. This behaviour is often repeated over time and can have lasting impacts on victims. Bullying takes many forms, including verbal, social, online and physical bullying.
- + **Intimate partner violence among young people:** This can include physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.
- + **Sexual violence and abuse:** Any behaviour thought to be of a sexual nature that is unwanted and takes place without consent. Sexual violence and abuse can be physical, psychological, verbal or online.
- + **Online abuse and violence:** This can include any type of abuse that happens on the internet and across a range of different devices (e.g. PC, mobile and gaming devices). Online abuse and violence can include cyberbullying, intimate image abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation.
- + **Gang violence:** Gangs typically engage in criminal activity and use violence or intimidation to enhance or preserve their power, reputation or economic resources. The nature of violence can vary largely, and includes homicide, knife- and gun-related offences, assault and exploitative crimes. Young people involved with gangs might be victims of violence or pressured into certain behaviours (e.g. stealing or carrying drugs or weapons). They might be abused, exploited and put into dangerous situations.
- + **Knife and gun crime:** This can include offences in which an individual is in possession of a weapon in a public place, have used a weapon against another person, or threatened an individual with a weapon.
- + **Exploitation and modern slavery:** Exploitation is the use of an individual (e.g. a child or young/vulnerable person) for someone's own advantage, gratification or profit, often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment. Exploitation can come in many forms, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and modern slavery.

Taken from: Youth Violence | Violence Prevention Unit ([violencepreventionwales.co.uk](http://violencepreventionwales.co.uk))



## The impact of exploitation

There is a close link between youth violence and exploitation. Exploitation is a term that encompasses a wide range of criminal acts.

The West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (WMVRP) has created a local definition of exploitation:

*'An individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child, young person (under the age of 18), or adult and exploits them a) through violence or the threat of violence, and/or b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or c) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants. The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.'* (WMVRP)

Exploitation can potentially be the front door to youth violence, and young people who are exploited are at a high risk of experiencing violence, intimidation and threats. Violence can be used as a method used by perpetrators of exploitation and abuse to control and coerce the young person into committing criminal acts, which may result in further acts of youth violence being carried out.

'Grooming' is a central part of how people are exploited. It is a process that involves building a connection with someone to coerce or deceive them into an exploitative situation. Once the abuser/s have gained the person's trust, they will try to isolate them and make them feel reliant and dependent on them through controlling and coercive tactics.

## 2. Common forms of exploitation

- + **Criminal exploitation** – being forced to take part in criminal activities such as transporting or selling illegal items (e.g. drugs); participating in violent or acquisitive crime; or grooming and exploiting other people.
- + **Sexual exploitation** – a form of sexual abuse in which people are pressured, manipulated or forced to commit sexual acts. They may be threatened with violence and may be groomed by offers of affection, money, friendship or gifts.
- + **Financial exploitation** – being deceived or coerced into handing over monetary funds or assets to others. This can happen through scams, fraud, blackmail, or through accrued debts.
- + **Labour exploitation** – being forced to work for little or no pay, often in poor conditions. People experiencing labour exploitation may have limited freedom and may be forced to live with other workers. Labour exploitation is a form of modern slavery.
- + **Modern slavery** – having control or ownership over another person and using this power to exploit them. Modern slavery can include human trafficking, enslavement, domestic servitude and forced labour.
- + **Radicalisation** – the process through which people come to support increasingly extreme political, religious or other ideals. This can lead them to support violent extremism and terrorism.

Adapted from: Identifying Exploitation - Preventing Exploitation Toolkit (Safer Devon Partnership)

'County lines' is a term that has increased in popular and media usage in recent years. It is a form of criminal exploitation and is of great concern not only in urban areas but also in rural areas. It is also often connected to incidents of youth violence. The National Crime Agency provides the following information:

## 3. Focus on criminal exploitation through county lines

- + County lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The 'county line' is the mobile phone line used to take the orders of drugs. Importing areas (areas where the drugs are taken to) are reporting increased levels of violence and weapons-related crimes as a result of this trend.
- + In some cases, the dealers will take over a local property, normally belonging to a vulnerable person, and use it to operate their criminal activity from. This is known as 'cuckooing'.
- + People exploited in this way will quite often be exposed to physical, mental and sexual abuse, and in some instances will be trafficked to areas a long way from home as part of the network's drug-dealing business.
- + As with child sexual exploitation, children often don't see themselves as victims or realise they have been groomed to get involved in criminality. So it's important that we all play our part to understand county lines and speak out if we have concerns.
- + A common feature in county lines drug supply is the exploitation of young and vulnerable people. The dealers will frequently target children and adults – often with mental health or addiction problems – to act as drug runners or move cash so they can stay under the radar of law enforcement.

Taken from: County Lines - National Crime Agency





#### 4. Some signs to look out for

Some signs to look out for include:

- + An increase in visitors and cars to a house or flat
- + New faces appearing at the house or flat
- + New and regularly changing residents (e.g. different accents compared to local accent)
- + Change in resident's mood and/or demeanour (e.g. secretive/withdrawn/aggressive/emotional)
- + Substance misuse and/or drug paraphernalia
- + Changes in the way young people you might know dress
- + Unexplained, sometimes unaffordable new things (e.g. clothes, jewellery, cars etc)
- + Residents or young people you know going missing, maybe for long periods of time
- + Young people seen in different cars/taxis driven by unknown adults
- + Young people seeming unfamiliar with your community or where they are
- + Truancy, exclusion, disengagement from school
- + An increase in anti-social behaviour in the community
- + Unexplained injuries.

Taken from: County Lines - National Crime Agency

#### Case study

The case study opposite, written by a professional with lived experience, provides an insight into what exploitation can look like in the life of a young person:

#### REMEMBER

*If there is a threat to life or significant risk of harm to the child or adult, the Police must be contacted immediately on 999.*

#### 5. Case Study

I received a referral for a 15-year-old young person (YP) from Birmingham who lived in a gang-affiliated neighbourhood. He shared a home with his mother, who had mental health issues. Both faced many complex disadvantages such as PTSD, domestic violence and the strain of being a single mother and son.

The YP used to play in the neighbourhood park when he was 12 years old, which was where the gang members liked to hang out. He did not have his father as much as he wished, and he never had a role model to protect him from the dangers of the streets. He had always had few friends. Locals preyed on him and took advantage of his vulnerability.

The YP was dragged into becoming linked with local gangs when he was observed outside his area by rival gangs and they assumed him to be a gang member. He told me that he had no intention of becoming a gang member until one day, when he was going through another area, someone shouted at him, accusing him of being a member of the gang in his neighbourhood. At that point, he ran for his life, wishing he had someone to protect

him. Because he was now being labelled as a member of a gang in his neighbourhood, he believed affiliating with a gang was his only defence against these rivals.

So that's when he entered into the circle, which he would later realise was his biggest blunder. As the years passed, he was given more responsibilities, such as holding items, moving them, and selling drugs on county lines as part of a group seeking to make money for the gang. Even though he knew that what he was doing was wrong, he felt it was the only way to protect himself and keep from being alone.

Only recently, when the YP started working with me, did I begin to open his eyes to how his life appeared from the outside looking in. I started working with him by chipping away at his mindset and understanding, encouraging desistance and diversion through one-to-one work around:

- + County lines, exploitation and carrying weapons
- + Gang exit
- + Building his emotional resilience and positive thinking

- + The Importance of education and right and wrong.

The YP now knew he had someone in his life who was a positive role model, who had left a life of crime behind and who could show him a different way. I wouldn't judge him or make him feel awkward in any of our conversations. He was a young man of a few words, he would never smile, but as I started establishing that rapport and working with him, he would open up and talk to me and even smile. He would tell me he was grateful to me.

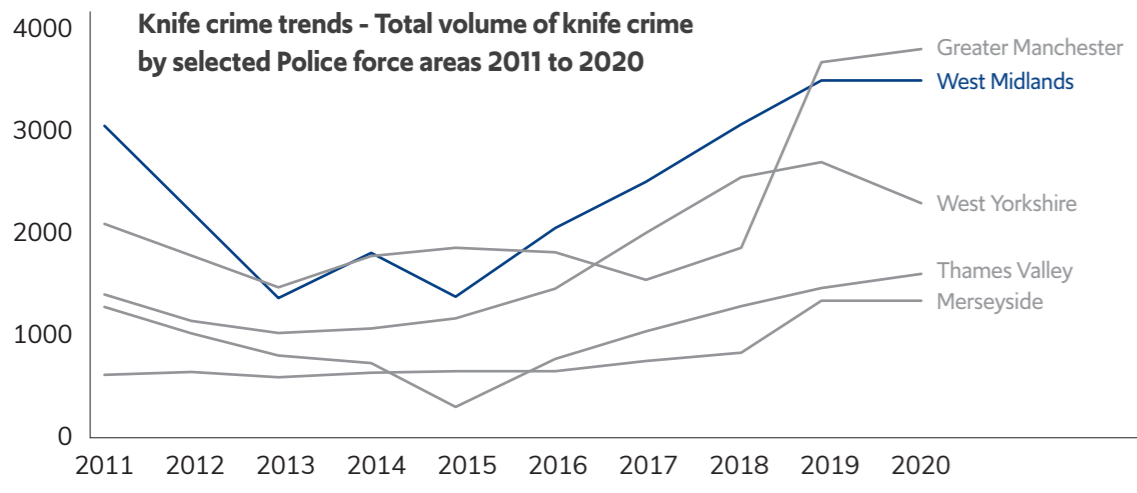
As well as supporting the YP, I would support mum throughout. I completed a supporting letter for her to give to the housing provider in order to get her moved out the area.

Since the YP has been living at his nan's, he has enrolled with a training facility to gain qualifications in construction, which I signposted him to. He is waiting for his mum to get moved so he can live with her again. He is always telling his mum how he wishes he could go back and not have gone to the park to play. It is sad to hear that he believes it's his fault for going to the local park to play as a child, and that, if he hadn't, he would not be in his situation.



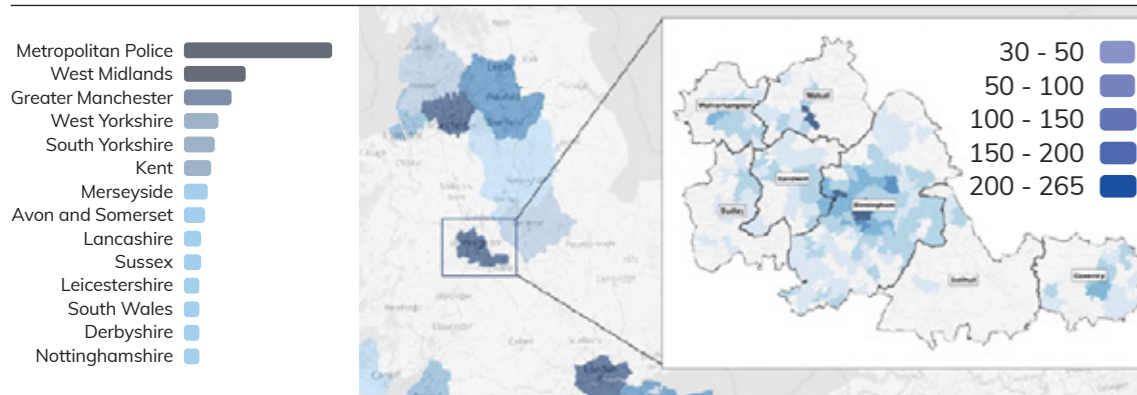
**Trends**

By collecting police data over time, we know that violence has been increasing over recent years across England. The top five police force areas (excluding London) have seen a rise in knife crime since 2015, but with some clear differences in the patterns and rate of increase (VRP SNA 2021).

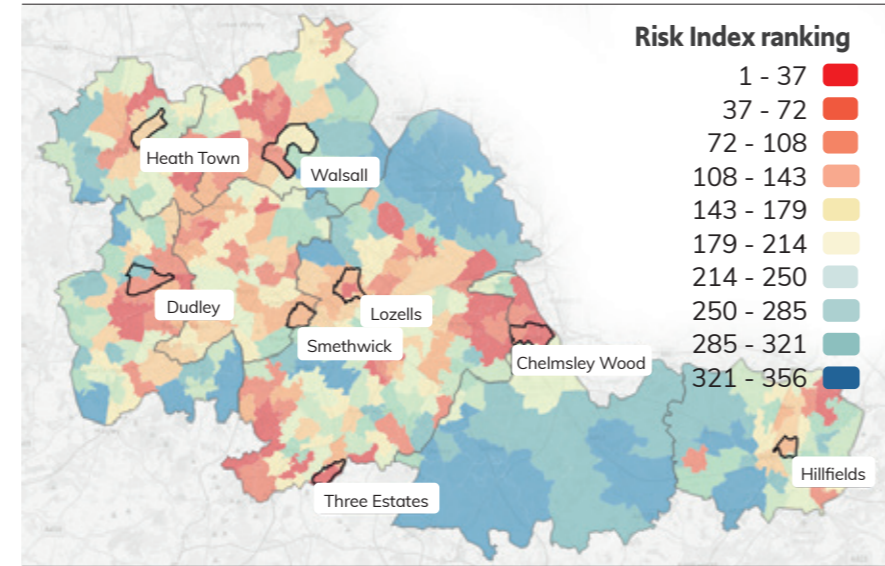


**Knife-related crime by volume**

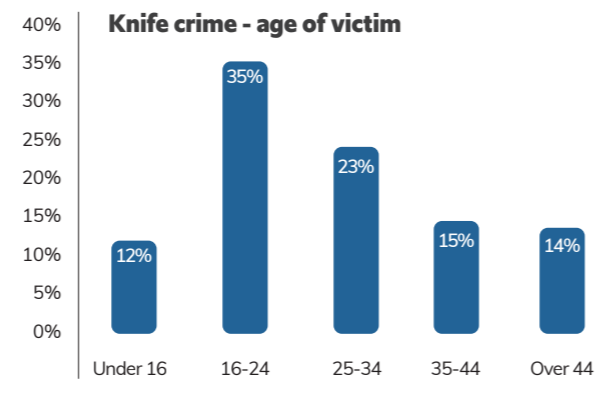
The following map shows the areas of England (and the West Midlands, in particular) most affected by violence (VRP SNA 2022).



The risk factors affecting violence vary across the West Midlands (VRP SNA 2021). There is a correlation between areas of deprivation and areas of violence. Areas where the WMVRP commissions intensive violence reduction activity (black-lined areas) are positioned in the areas of high risk, but other areas are high risk too.



The highest number of victims can be found in the 16-24 age bracket (VRP SNA 2021).



View the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) at [www.wmvrp-sna.org](http://www.wmvrp-sna.org) or scan the code below



The latest data (WMVRP SNA 2022) shows us that:

- + For offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, the West Midlands had a rate of 153.1 per 100,000 of the population, the highest in England and Wales.
- + Town centres had the highest volume of violence. While there was a lull in lockdown, there was a three-year high in August 2021.
- + The typical age of victims tends towards younger people, with under 34s making up more than half of all victims of violence with injury.
- + 10 to 15-year-olds convicted for knife offences is up from 50 (2014) to 200 (2020).
- + People of Black ethnicity make up 12% of victims of knife crime, which is approximately double the rate in the West Midlands population.

**Root causes**

So, what is causing this observed rise in serious youth violence that is leading to so much pain, grief and fear in our communities? The answer to this question is complex and multi-faceted: there is no one single cause of violence. Research tells us that there are several potential factors involved; however, we cannot assume that the risk factors will be the same for all involved in violence.

**Trauma**

Exposure to trauma is a very important factor but not widely understood. Trauma is an experience involving powerlessness and terror that is overwhelming and can prevent senses of safety and security (Betsy di Thierry, 2014). NHS Education for Scotland (2018) distinguishes between two types: single one-off events, or 'complex trauma', which is often persistent and associated with close relationships (for example,

forms of abuse). One study found that 91% of young offenders in custody (n=200) had experienced some form of abuse or loss (Wright, S., Liddle, M., & Goodfellow, P., 2016).

With such stark statistics, many now look to understand how these experiences can potentially lead to increased levels of vulnerability to violence and criminality later in life. As such, the WMVRP takes a 'trauma-informed approach' to tackling youth violence, which essentially aims to understand an individual's current behaviour in the context of possible past trauma and adversity.

**Childhood adversity**

The VRP's approach is based on research on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which are potentially traumatic or stressful events that occur in childhood. These can be a repeating pattern of events or a single, powerfully traumatic incident. There is a growing body of research that is exploring the connection between early childhood experiences and poor health and wellbeing outcomes across the life course (NHS Wales).

In 1998, Felitti et al. published work in the US that identified a relationship between early adversity and negative outcomes in later life. While their original study was based in an obesity clinic, several other publications since then identified a similar relationship with other health and social outcomes. These outcomes varied across ages, for example, from problems in education settings, to later engaging in risky behaviours such as substance misuse or criminal acts. This has been evidenced in the UK, where the English national study (Bellis et al, 2014) found that exposure to 4+ ACEs (compared with no reported ACEs) increased the likelihood of engaging in violence by a factor of seven, and likewise the Welsh ACEs study (Bellis, 2015) reported a 14x increase.

However, our understanding has developed since the original research was published. We now strongly discourage the use of any form of pre-existing list of ACEs as a screening tool or to compare individuals, and instead acknowledge that an experience being deemed as 'traumatic' is down to each individual's perception and should be accepted as such. Additionally, we avoid any deterministic language that suggests that all people who experience a form of early adversity will definitely experience negative outcomes in life. Rather, our contention is that becoming aware of an individual's early experiences can help us to understand how it can potentially link to outcomes such as involvement in violence later in life.

**How do you feel about rising levels of youth violence?**

'Not sure.'

'I feel bad for the young people into today society as I don't think get much support or their needs being met... It's worry how much people don't have respect for people and care for their wellbeing.'

'Pathetic – petty reasons for it. Kids think it's cool to show off in front of mates.'

**Quotes from young people**



## 6. Risk factors

There is a growing body of evidence for the factors that can heighten the risk of young people being involved in violence – either as victims or perpetrators. These risk factors can be cumulative, whereby the presence of multiple risk factors can increase the overall risk.

- + **Demographic profile:** Characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity can increase the risk of involvement in violence. For example, boys and young men have an increased risk of being involved with knife-related violence, whereas girls and young women have a higher risk of victimisation from intimate partner and sexual violence and abuse.
- + **Psychological and behavioural characteristics:** These can include

hyperactivity, attention problems, poor behavioural control, sensation seeking and impulsiveness. Furthermore, involvement in gangs or delinquent and risky behaviour can lead to violence.

- + **Exposure to trauma:** Youth violence is often considered as an adverse childhood experience (ACE); however, exposure to ACEs (e.g. abuse, neglect, parental mental health) and violence in the community can also perpetuate the risk of being a victim and/or perpetrator of violence.
- + **Education:** Low academic achievement and aspirations and poor commitment and engagement with school are associated with violence.

- + **Alcohol and drugs:** Easy access to – and consumption of – drugs and alcohol can lead to violence.
- + **Deprivation:** While anyone can be a victim of violence, certain types of violence (such as gang-related violence) are more prevalent in the most deprived communities). Income and employment deprivation can increase the risk of violence.
- + **Parental relationships:** The attachment between child and parent, parental disciplinary actions and the monitoring and supervision of a child (e.g. harsh or lax parenting) can impact on the likelihood of an individual being involved in violence.

Taken from: : Youth Violence | Violence Prevention Unit ([violencepreventionwales.co.uk](http://violencepreventionwales.co.uk))

## The potential impacts of childhood adversity

One way of understanding the potential link between childhood adversity and violence is to explore effects of trauma on child development. For example, people who have previously experienced a form of adversity may later find it difficult to form trusting relationships (or conversely trust too easily). They may become withdrawn, or have issues with self-esteem. Moreover, when individuals find it difficult to articulate their feelings, it may be that their 'disruptive' behaviours are trying to communicate an unmet need.

Additionally, exposure to trauma can affect how the brain and body develop and respond. Prolonged exposure to toxic stress, combined with the absence of supportive relationships, risks damage to structures of the brain, which may potentially hinder development of emotional and social skills (NSPCC, 2017). Persistent exposure to trauma can also lead to individuals being hyper-vigilant – operating in 'survival mode', in which an individual can become prone to perceiving threats around them. On the other hand, some may be less responsive, appear numb and find it difficult to regulate their emotions and feelings.

Particularly given that society can often isolate people who do not deal with challenges in 'socially acceptable' ways, it becomes understandable why young people may gravitate towards others in similar situations. This may explain how individuals can become vulnerable to child criminal exploitation, for example, and become further involved in violence. It can also help us to understand why young people may find it difficult to navigate the educational or criminal justice systems, or seek and accept support from professionals.

Ultimately, in order to respond effectively to increased rates of youth violence, it is useful to explore how early experiences an individual has faced may relate to present behaviour. This is not used to justify the actions, but rather indicates how a child's development may be affected and have effects on their sense of self, social interactions and overall vulnerabilities to engaging in violence. Early prevention, and taking a 'public health approach', are therefore key if young people are to build trusting relationships in the context of a safe and empowering environment, free from violence.





## 2. THE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO VIOLENCE REDUCTION

Each of the 20 Violence Reduction Units in England and Wales share an underpinning set of principles which guide their work. This shared approach is known as the 'public health approach' and was first used with great success in the United States and then by the Scottish VRU in Glasgow over a 15-year period.

### What is it?

Fundamentally, a public health approach to reducing and preventing violence focuses on the root causes of violent behaviour and works to prevent violence happening in the first place, by tackling some of the drivers for violence, which can happen at an early age.

Interventions, especially those in early childhood, prevent people from developing a propensity for violence. They also improve education outcomes, employment prospects and long-term health outcomes. Addressing the issue of violence and its root causes can improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and have wider positive implications for the economy and society.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has developed a public health approach to reducing violence, which includes the following four key points, outlined by Dahlberg et al (2002):

### 1. Data

The starting point is to look at the data to define the problem:

- + Where and when is the violence happening?
- + Which group of people is particularly affected?

This helps to build a picture of violence that enables the violence reduction units to work in the areas with the greatest needs.

### 2. Identification of risk and protective factors

The WHO's next step is to identify the common risk factors driving violence (such as trauma) and the protective factors preventing violence. There are several

'protective factors' (such as increased resilience, which is the ability to 'bounce back' after adversity) that can offset the impact of trauma.

The public health approach to preventing violence also advocates for preventing ACEs happening in the first place. Research by Harvard University has identified a set of factors that help children to achieve positive outcomes in the face of significant adversity (Center on the Developing Child, 2015). Individuals who demonstrate resilience in response to one form of adversity may not necessarily do so in response to another. Yet when communities and families strengthen these factors, they optimise resilience across multiple contexts. Factors include:

The WHO encourages identification of these factors and implementing interventions across all levels: individual, relationship, community and societal, at the same time. The evidence shows that taking a two-pronged approach to reducing risk factors and to enhancing protective factors is effective at reducing violence. **Adapted from WHO: [www.who.int/groups/violence-prevention-alliance/approach](http://www.who.int/groups/violence-prevention-alliance/approach)**



- + providing supportive adult-child relationships
- + scaffolding learning so the child builds a sense of self-efficacy and control
- + helping to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities and
- + using faith and cultural traditions as a foundation for hope and stability.

This fourth factor, in particular, is what we will be exploring in more depth in this Toolkit.

### 3. Development and evaluation of interventions

The WMVRP is working with communities across the West Midlands to develop interventions at a place-based level to reduce violence. These interventions might take place in different contexts, such as the criminal justice system, health sector, educational, sports, or faith settings.

### 4. Implementation of effective interventions

These interventions are being evaluated and, if effective, will be scaled up to have a larger impact. The VRP is developing the evidence base on 'what works' to reduce violence.

### 5. The West Midlands public health approach

In the West Midlands, we have broadened the WHO model to ensure that we:

- + work collaboratively
- + develop the evidence base
- + promote innovation
- + promote equity and equality
- + build on the strengths of individuals and communities
- + adopt a trauma-informed approach.

Violence is a result of several interacting risk factors that affect individuals, families, communities and society. No issue relating to violence has a single cause or a single solution. So, to have an impact on the context and underlying risk factors that lead to violence, different partners across local areas need to work together and adopt a whole-systems approach. **Faith groups are an integral part of the 'whole system' and can be powerful leaders of change within communities.**

### Key principles of the public health approach





## 3. FAITH-BASED APPROACHES

### So, what role do faith communities play in helping to reduce violence among young people and communities?

The remainder of this Toolkit is written in response to that question. We begin by contending that faith communities are critically important contributors to the life of society and are also well positioned as much-needed sources of support for young people growing up in an uncertain and often frightening world. Faith communities, and the spiritual, moral and ethical approaches they practise, are an 'untapped component' in efforts to reduce serious youth violence.

### Faith and society in a post-COVID world

Whether you have a personal faith or not, it is not difficult to see evidence of the many positive impacts that people of faith, both as individuals and as part of wider communities, can play in the life of society. In addition to providing a space for prayer and worship, faith buildings are hubs for the community, where the needs of some of the most marginalised people in society are met. Through countless donations of volunteering hours, money and good will, faith communities can be found running various grassroots social projects. Together, faith communities are helping to lay the foundations for resilient and compassionate communities for young people to grow up in.

Sadly, however, the social contribution of faith communities has not always been widely recognised by statutory bodies, and relationships between faith communities and the police have sometimes been characterised by mistrust. The possible reasons

for this are several and complex and have been explored in more detail elsewhere (see, for example, Anderson, 2017). These reasons must be more fully acknowledged and addressed if relationships of trust and cooperation are to be (re)built.

Attitudes have begun to change over the last two years, during the COVID pandemic. Since March 2020, many local authorities have commissioned faith-based organisations to deliver programmes such as food banks and befriending services to many thousands of people (see for example, Green Lane Masjid and Community Centre, 2021). Public leaders are beginning to see the many ways in which faith communities serve society and are calling for faith communities to be allowed to take a more strategic role in meeting social needs (See page 85 for examples).

Sadly, the pandemic has exacerbated many pre-existing social issues, and conditions for crime are continuing to increase. Young people's education, development and prospects have been severely disrupted by time away from school, youth clubs and other extra-curricular activities during successive lockdowns. There is therefore a pressing need to work much more closely with faith communities, to support and expand their work in the community, to equip and upskill their staff and volunteers, and to more effectively coordinate, connect and evaluate their social projects and initiatives. Doing so will enhance their already hugely positive contributions to society.

### Faiths responding to violence

One area in which faith communities have long played a leading and visible role is in the aftermath of violent incidents. Anderson (2017) notes that faith communities, often in the heart of communities

affected by violence, can be found on the frontline of providing pastoral care to traumatised victims, families and communities. Faith leaders are frequently called on to bury victims, console grieving families and rebuild social cohesion. Faith leaders also play a crucial role in helping to break the cycle of violence, countering the narrative that violence begets violence.

Faith leaders are not paid or rewarded to deliver this service but do so out of a heartfelt commitment to their local community. It is vital that local authorities recognise this form of responsive support. Faith leaders need to be better trained if they are to sustain an effective pastoral ministry, and their own wellbeing, in the midst of trauma and grief.

While responses to violence are important, more needs to be done to prevent violence in the first place.

### Faiths in preventing violence

We were introduced to the concept of 'protective factors' in the previous section, and the forms they take at the individual, relationships, community and societal levels. Faith communities are well placed to provide such protective factors (although they may not describe them in such terms) and so help to tackle the root causes of violence, preventing it before it takes place. Faith communities have their own language, approaches and values that also serve to protect and support young people.

#### At an individual level

Faith communities can have a powerful role in building children's resilience to negative influences in society.

- + **Identity:** Faith gives young people a positive sense of identity that they are part of a story that is bigger than themselves, that they are of great innate value and created for a purpose.
- + **Positive values:** Teaching positive values to children from a young age helps them to develop compassion and empathy for others, and they are more likely to pursue peaceful means of resolving conflict.

#### At a relationship level

Faith communities can also help at a relational level by supporting families to create stable home environments for children or by providing access to nurturing and responsive relationships through a wider 'family' of believers.

- + **Belonging:** Faith communities can provide a caring, loving community outside the nuclear family. Providing a feeling of safety and belonging helps to counter the efforts of those who would exploit vulnerable young people.
- + **Positive role models:** In faith communities, young people can find positive role models and responsible adults who, it is argued, can act as mentors and guide young people through life. (Lindsay, 2018; Cornwell, 2018)
- + **Pastoral support:** Trials are an inevitable part of life, but faith communities often have well-developed structures of pastoral support that can provide a path to recovery and personal growth.

#### At the community and societal level

Faith groups can help harness the power of communities to promote community cohesion and positive social change. Faith communities can work in partnership with local authorities to create a culture where violence is not acceptable.

- + **Counter-narratives:** Faith groups can encourage communities to create a movement that advocates that preventing violence is 'everybody's business'. They can also promote positive messages to young people and support positive aspirations that are alternatives to criminal activities.
- + **Social justice:** Faith communities can give material and emotional support and so help to counteract the impacts of deprivation on the most vulnerable.
- + **Assets and resources:** Many faith communities have buildings, volunteers, and/or funds. In the context of cuts to public services, many have advocated that these assets and resources can be better mobilised for the benefit of young people (Lindsay, 2018; Cornwell, 2018)

When these aspects are brought together, young people with access to faith communities are potentially well positioned to become resilient, compassionate and active members of society and, therefore, much less likely to commit crime. It does not mean, however, that they are immune or invulnerable to exploitation or violence. Faith communities alone can play a powerful part in, but are never the whole answer to, preventing violence among young people. This is why it is essential that faith communities are enabled to work more closely with local authorities and others working on the violence reduction agenda.

With the addition of effective training, you can have the makings of a coordinated, committed and well-resourced faith-based response to youth violence (Lindsay, 2018; Cornwell, 2018; General Synod of the Church of England, 2019). There is precedent for this taking place, as seen in the so-called 'Boston Miracle'.

### The 'Boston Miracle'

The so-called 'Boston Miracle', taking place during the early 1990s in the American city of Boston, began with tragedy. Members of a gang entered a church and stabbed a rival gang member who was attending the funeral of another murdered young man. The church leaders could have responded by closing the doors of the church and isolating themselves from the dangers of life outside. Instead, the church leaders met with police, undertook detached youth work with local young people, and ran mini tent gatherings for young people on topics of interest. They also worked alongside police to meet gang-associated young people known at the time as 'troubled youths'. The result of this and other interventions saw the murder rate in Boston fall dramatically.

Referred to in the Commission on Gangs and Violence (Anderson, 2017)



Learning from past failures

Safeguarding failures

While there is much good work undertaken by faith groups, sadly faith communities have sometimes seriously failed to safeguard vulnerable young people and adults in their care, with tragic consequences. Recent reports, including from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), demonstrate that no faith community has been without examples of such failure (IICSA, 2020a; IICSA 2020b; IICSA 2021). Failures are not always restricted to individual 'bad apples'; rather such cases are facilitated by a lack of accountability for those in positions of power and a communal culture of silence in the face of injustice and abuse (see for example, thirtyone:eight, 2022). These failures contradict the very teachings of each of the major faiths but demonstrate that all members of faith communities must be vigilant and recognise their responsibility to safeguard others.

It is hoped that this Toolkit will begin or continue the necessary conversations that all faith communities and places of worship must have about safeguarding and wellbeing that can help overcome any barriers to reporting abuse. A section later in the Toolkit (Section 4.9) is dedicated to providing advice, guidance and safeguarding best practice when working with young people and vulnerable adults.

Provided faith communities have robust policies and procedures, faith communities can make a significant positive contribution.

How do you think faith communities could better support young people?

'Not sure.'

'Understand that other people might have different views.'

'Doing group activities weekly and teaching young people life skills and how to be confident with their self.'



4. THE FAITH ALLIANCE

In recent years, partners in the West Midlands have been intentional and have committed resources to exploring how the public health approach and faith-based approaches to violence reduction can interweave and complement each other. The result of this synergy in the West Midlands is the ongoing work of the Faith Alliance.

The Faith Alliance is a multi-faith network that brings together faith representatives and organisations from across the West Midlands and beyond, around the agenda of reducing youth violence.

The Faith Alliance exists to help equip, enable and empower communities of all faiths and none across the West Midlands to further understand and prevent serious youth violence.

This section will unpack how the Faith Alliance came about, its structure and vision, and its potential as a model for other parts of the country.

Background

The roots of the Faith Alliance lie not in the WMVRP but in the community. In 2017, the Revd. Dr. Carver Anderson published the Commission on Gangs and Violence, a research report commissioned by the then Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands, David Jamieson. The report looked into the causes and characteristics of an observed rise in gang-related violence in Birmingham and concluded by making 24 recommendations to the Commissioner.

Among these recommendations was Recommendation 21, which called for a coordinated, multi-faith approach and an exploration of faith-based approaches, all with the purpose of increasing the peace. It can now be found being worked out through the Faith Alliance.

Recommendation 21: 'The commission's action plan should include exploration and review of faith-based approaches to gangs and violence. The commission should develop a co-ordinated approach to engage all inter-faith and multi-faith forums/groups in Birmingham. The aims are to discuss the role of faith, values and morals in issues around organised crime, gangs and violence and to promote working together, especially in 'priority neighbourhoods', to increase the peace.'

Two years later, in late 2019, shortly after the establishment of the WMVRP, the Faith Alliance was born. The first members were those who had been involved in the Commission, predominantly black church leaders. The membership began to grow and diversify to include representatives of other faith groups in the West Midlands. Two influential faith leaders were appointed as co-chairs to ensure that the Faith Alliance was visibly and strategically led by the community.

Progress slowed during the pandemic, but the membership of the Faith Alliance has grown from around 30 members in February 2020, to some 200 in March 2022. The WMVRP, in supporting the Faith Alliance, became the first VRP in the country to have a workstream dedicated to exploring the role of faith

communities in violence reduction. The Faith Alliance members help to design and mobilise community-led strategies that utilise spiritual, moral, social and ethical approaches to reduce violence.

METHODOLOGY

The Faith Alliance had its first online network gathering in July 2021, at which members agreed that the work should be driven forward by several smaller working groups, based on areas of work identified by faith communities prior to the pandemic. Working groups began meeting in September 2021, and most have since met monthly, gathering good practice to be included in this Toolkit. There are now several areas of work that reflect the different ways in which faith communities can help to reduce violence (see Theory of change: Outputs).



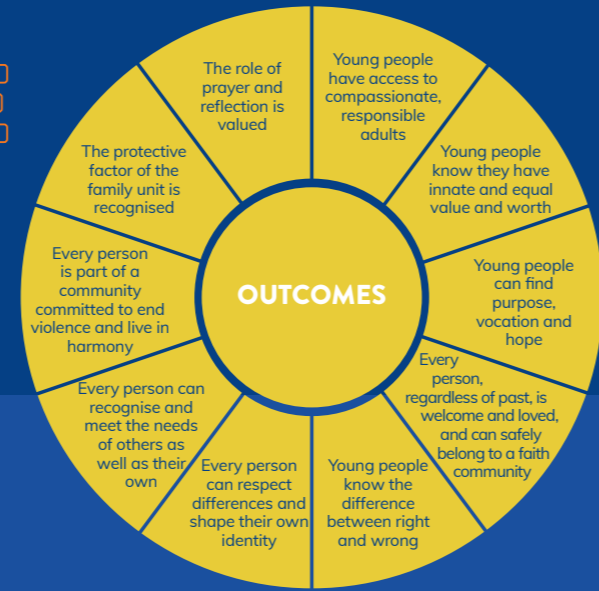




# FAITH ALLIANCE THEORY OF CHANGE

**VISION:** Faith communities working together to build peace and unity within individuals, families and wider society in the West Midlands

**MISSION:** The Faith Alliance is a community-led movement that exists to help equip, enable and empower communities of all faiths and none across the West Midlands to better understand and take a long-term approach to preventing serious youth violence.



## THEORY OF CHANGE

Over the course of several workshops, members of the Faith Alliance worked together to produce a comprehensive theory of change, which demonstrates how faith-based approaches complement the objectives of the public health approach.

A theory of change sets out the long-term objectives of a project and the steps that will be taken to get there. The Faith Alliance's theory of change is a fluid and evolving resource, which still needs greater youth engagement in future editions to make it even stronger and more robust.

The following vision and mission statements for the Faith Alliance were also produced:

**Vision** - Faith communities working together to build peace and unity within individuals, families and wider society in the West Midlands.

**Mission** - The Faith Alliance is a community-led movement that exists to help equip, enable and empower communities of all faiths and none across the West Midlands to better understand and take a long-term approach to preventing serious youth violence.

- + **Shared values:** our starting point; why faith communities do what they do
- + **Inputs:** the various basic resources and assets that faith communities have and can contribute to the work of violence reduction
- + **Outputs:** the various practical ways that faith communities can make a difference to young people, by combining the various inputs
- + **Outcomes:** what will come about if the outputs are delivered effectively
- + **Impact:** the longer-term impacts both within faith communities, between faiths communities, and between faith communities and local authorities, assuming the outcomes are met.

## A MODEL FOR ELSEWHERE?

The Faith Alliance is one model of how faith communities can work together in collaboration with local authorities to tackle the root causes of youth violence. The Faith Alliance is still quite a young network and has mostly been operating during a pandemic. There are a range of key ingredients that have made the Faith Alliance a successful model to date (set out in the 'Strategy' part of Section 4); however, we will continue to evaluate our work and explore with others how it can be improved.





# SECTION 2:

## Why should I respond?



### 1. COMMON VALUES

In section 1, we saw how faith communities could use their resources to help reduce violence, but it has not yet been argued why among so many other priorities.

This section provides some answers and begins by highlighting that, whatever our beliefs or worldview, the vast majority of people share a set of common values. However, it also goes a step further and offers a theological justification for why, according to their own scriptures and beliefs, each of the five largest faith communities in the West Midlands has a duty to challenge violence. People of different faiths see it as their responsibility, even their act of worship, to help safeguard young people and reduce levels of violence in the community.

We acknowledge that not every faith tradition is represented here, and so appreciate that this section is essentially incomplete. We warmly welcome members from other faiths and none to join this movement. We also acknowledge that, tragically, adherents of various faiths have not always opposed violence in the way that their scriptures teach (Gill, 2018). This section shows that, when taught faithfully, each faith community seeks peace and human flourishing.

The following shared values were included in the Faith Alliance's theory of change. These values provide inspiration and motivation for our work together:

- + **Sanctity of life:** all life is precious and worthy of protection
- + **Unconditional love:** all are worthy of love whatever they have done
- + **Peace:** what we all seek for ourselves, our families and our communities
- + **Hope:** things can and will get better
- + **Compassion and forgiveness:** everyone can have chances to start afresh
- + **Humility and integrity:** the way we work together to serve our communities.



### 2. FAITH REFLECTIONS

#### Christianity

Faith, hope and love underpin what Jesus said in the Bible:

*'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.'*

(Luke 4:18)

This is the basis of our Christian response to violence reduction: the proclamation of the good news to the poor and marginalised; freedom to those in custody; healing of those who have been hurt; and liberation for those who are exploited. Violence is reduced where communities work together to both proclaim and 'make good news'. This is God's love in Word and action for those who are broken, marginalised and where hopelessness is a way of life and thinking. It is God's message too for those who break, destroy, imprison, damage and exploit.

Our response is not naive. We are all too familiar with the details and trends of the crime and violence that continue to impact families and communities. We have seen the far-reaching effects over time. We have heard too many stories of pain from victims and perpetrators. The reduction of violence, and changing the conditions that nurture it, is the business of individuals, families and communities. It is our mission to improve the world by reducing the perceived need to express conflict as violence. This means that we have to be serious as Christians in our exploration of the possible causes of, influences of and solutions to the serious violence linked to crime and the violence of our everyday lives.

There is no single answer. Jesus' declaration of the Jubilee in Luke 4, offers a multi-pointed solution based in actions and faith, befitting families, communities and neighbourhoods. We do what we can to free, heal, encourage and liberate wherever and whenever we can. As we create communities of peace, the principles of justice, compassion, kindness, integrity, humility, forgiveness and accountability will challenge the structures and expressions of violence.

Such values threaten those who profit from the practice and threaten violence. Those who profit from or conduct violence do not all look like 'criminals' or 'thugs', but still need to be challenged to respect God, walk humbly and love justice. Such processes of personal transformation often take time, nurturing and support.

If we are to respond, we need to ask ourselves a number of serious questions.

- + Are we aware of the realities, facts, figures and experiences (of victims and perpetrators) around crime and violence? How might we research and explore these issues?
- + How do we understand what our churches say about acts of violence and conflict? What do they suggest we could do about them?
- + How do we proclaim the good news of Luke 4, the Year of the Jubilee, through the programmes and activities that we implement?
- + How might we work with others to maximise our joint impact on violence reduction and prevention? What does Jesus say about being salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) in communities as we seek to bring hope to those impacted by crime and violence?
- + Along with prayer (strategic and focused), what actions are required to deal with the causes and impact of organised crime, youth violence, and everyday abuse?

*Some might complain that questions do not create communities of peace or reduce violence. In themselves, they don't; however, working together for the answers will.*

By the Revd Dr Carver Anderson,  
Bringing Hope





## Islam

In Islam, all crimes are selfish. There is no such thing as a selfless crime. Every possible sin involves hurting others: murder, rape, slavery, robbery, drugs, grooming and so many more. Islam asks us to develop a moral consciousness at all times and to reflect on what one sinful act can do to an entire community.

Islam reminds us that all crimes are counterproductive. No matter how profitable criminals view a particular sin, it never leads to long-term benefit. Certainly, it does not lead to inner satisfaction. In fact, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) defined 'sin' on this very basis. He said that 'sin is that which troubles your soul and causes a heaviness on the inside' (Musnad Ahmad).

All crimes disrupt the peace of society. Islam has always placed peace and security as the most important ingredients in a community. Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him) lived in Syria and was instructed to migrate to the Hijaz (modern-day Saudi Arabia). The first thing he did when he reached the new land was to supplicate: 'O Lord! Make this a peaceful land...' (Quran, 2: 126). Security precedes everything.

Peace (Salam) is perhaps the most central teaching of Islam. The religion is named after the Arabic for peace. A Muslim's greeting wishes peace for others (Asalam Alaykum). Allah has 99 beautiful names, of which one is 'As-Salam'. The first word that the inhabitants of paradise will hear as they enter will be 'Salam'. Serious violence never leads to Salam; neither for the perpetrators, the victims, nor the wider community.

Faith has the potential to inspire and motivate good works. It is undeniably a powerful force in our lives and commands good works, while it also requires us to build strong and healthy communities. Faith communities are uniquely placed to influence, to challenge and to transform social and cultural norms. It is important to highlight to our communities that being passive to crime and its impacts is not an option. Standing up against violent crime and the perpetrators of crime is an act of ibadah (worship).

*'Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right and forbids what is wrong. Those who do, are the successful ones.'*  
(Quran 3:104)

**By the Bahu Trust, Birmingham**

## Sikhism

In order to offer a solution to youth violence, we must examine the socio-economic causes of it. Most research indicates that the following factors are reasons for youth violence:

- + poverty and poor economic conditions
- + alcohol and drug abuse
- + lack of education
- + poor parental relationships
- + poor role models and negative peer pressure groups.

If we examine these five factors, we can see how Sikhi offers solutions to both the Material and Spiritual aspects of the factors listed above.

Firstly, if we examine Sikhi's response to poverty, we can offer the solutions of Daswandh, whereby individuals donate 10% of their income to those less fortunate through the virtue of compassion. In addition, children living in poor economic conditions may often adopt poor nutrition and have bad diets. Sikhi offers a solution to this issue through the concept of Langar whereby free vegetarian food is offered at every Gurdwara (Sikh place of Worship), and many charitable Sikh organisations and volunteers go out and set up public camps and serve Langar to those less fortunate across the country.

When it comes to alcohol and drug abuse, the Sikh teaching is very clear: the only true medicine is Naam, which is having an open spiritual relationship with Vaheguru (the Lord). This can be achieved by simply reciting the name of God for the ultimate divine experience. In addition, the Sikh faith teaches that drugs, alcohol and other intoxicants may offer temporary relief in a material world, but they are not healthy for the mind, body and soul, and they do not offer a truthful solution to any problems.

In relation to education, Sikhism teaches that individuals should have a strong discipline in achieving success in life by studying and working hard. To meet their goals and aspirations, young people need the motivation to work hard and to leave behind a life of violence that would limit their options for their future.

Factors such as poor parental relationships and poor role models can be solved by joining the religious congregation (Sangat), where individuals can feel at home without experiencing any discrimination and look up to volunteers (sevadars). By observing the charitable acts that Sikh volunteers perform, individuals begin to develop empathy and compassion and to be humble and content with themselves. In addition to this, the merciful Guru in the Sikh scriptures offers salvation.

As a martial race, it is important to note that Sikhi teaches that baptised Sikhs are trained in martial arts and carry the Kirpans to help others and for purposes of self-defence. This instils a very strict discipline in individuals undertaking these duties. Sikhs do not engage in violent acts as a means to attack, only to defend. In addition, the 10th Guru explicitly states:

*'Dushman, naal saam, daam, bhaed, aadiak, upaa vartnae ate uprant udh karnaa*

*When dealing with enemies, practice diplomacy, employ a variety of tactics, and exhaust all techniques before engaging in warfare.'*

*From the 52 Hukams (orders) written by Guru Gobind Singh Ji*

**By Gurdwara Guru Nanak Parkash, Coventry**





## Hinduism

Hindus have, from times immemorial, laid great emphasis on imparting values (known as samskara) to their growing children. Education comes at the top, along with values of conduct and behaviour. These include being polite and respectful in speech, and always acting in a friendly and constructive manner. The values must be, and are, imparted from very early childhood, and the message given is that living according to these values is not guidance, but duty. One has a duty to the welfare of the family, the peace of society and the stability of the nation. One should never cause or seek to harm another, but always strive to do things that give happiness to others. Seeing the divine in every being, one must have a respectful attitude towards others.

It is abundantly clear in the Hindu sacred texts how important it is to raise children to be model citizens and not to indulge in violence and disorder. It is the duty of all Hindus in this country to continue imparting those instructions through the generations.

A principal theme in Hindu Dharma is 'shanti' (inner peace). It is a natural state where individuals revel in inner bliss and are calm and in harmony with their environment and the whole universe. This concept is derived from the 'Maha Upanisad' and is known as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', meaning 'the whole world is one family'. Where there is such unity and peace, how can there be any room for violence? Kindness and oneness can eliminate violence in all its forms.

Hindus attribute external calamities such as youth violence to the state of the inner mind and recommend calming or relaxing the minds of the youth as opposed to punishing them for their sins. A calm mind is in a position to value noble ideas such as 'ahimsā' (non-violence) and 'karuna' (compassion). A calm mind naturally tends to pivot towards a peaceful approach to life through which the spark of compassion unfolds in the heart towards fellow brothers and sisters. Once youth experience this truth or 'Satyam', respecting diversity and experiencing the unity among their friends and peers, then nothing but love is realised towards all humankind.

Hindu Dharma promotes the idea of 'Karma', through which youth can act with a sense of purpose and vigour, while working towards their life goals. This can give rise to great productivity as opposed to bloodshed. In essence, Hindu Dharma teachings can inspire youth to inner peace, joy and success without the cost of terror and violence.

*'Offering the results of all activities to God, the karma yogis attain everlasting peace. Whereas those who, being impelled by their desires, work with a selfish motive become entangled because they are attached to the fruits of their actions.'*  
(Shrimad Bhagavad Gitaji Chapter V verse 12)

By Hindu Think Tank UK



## Judaism

For Judaism, children and young people are our precious possession. It is a 'mitzvah' (commandment) to have children and to care and nurture them. Once children are born, parents have a duty to educate them. This includes teaching them a trade so that they can be self-sufficient. According to some, they also have to teach them to swim. In other words, parents have to equip their children with the tools for survival and for independent living. If parents are unable to do these things, for example if a child is orphaned, then the community must step in to do so – the Jewish equivalent of 'it takes a village to raise a child'. Children are a communal responsibility and no child is left uncared for.

Boys are theoretically responsible for their deeds at the age of 13 (girls at the age of 12), but it is recognised nowadays that at such a young age they are not mature and need to be nurtured and helped when they go astray. In any case, 13 is older than the age of criminal responsibility in Britain, which at 10 is lower than in most Western countries.

The current wave of violence, and knife crime in particular, is a shocking indictment of our society. Judaism views the shedding of blood as a grave crime. Each human being is made in the image of God and unique, so destroying a person, the rabbis of the second century CE said, is like destroying an entire world, and to save one is to save an entire world. So, it is necessary to do anything we can to prevent violence. Offenders should be punished, but more important is to make sure that they do not offend in the first place. If the offenders are children, all the more should we create conditions in which they do not turn to violence.

Much violence among young people is due to them carrying knives for what they think is self-defence. They carry knives because they are scared for

their own safety, but the weapons may be used against them, or they may end up using weapons against their better judgement. We have failed our young people terribly by not ensuring that they live in a safe environment. Without being simplistic, some things are clear: too many do not have safe places to go. It is the most vulnerable children, for example those in the care system, who suffer most. We have not provided the support for our young people in their communities that their parents may not have been able to. Youth clubs and other facilities for young people have been drastically cut. At the same time, too many live in poverty so that there is an attraction to making money through the drugs trade or by other illegal means.

Judaism teaches us to love peace and pursue peace. It also promises, 'All your children shall be taught of God and great shall be the peace of your children' (Isaiah 54:13). In a secular society, I would interpret this as meaning that all our children should be taught the values to live by so that they can live in peace. They will learn these lessons best not through didactic (moral) teaching but by example. If we help our children to feel safe, then they will not feel the need to threaten others. If we care for our children and value them, they will learn to treat others with compassion.

Our religious traditions can help us to address the current spate of violence and the tragic and needless loss of lives. Our children deserve better from us and it is up to all of us to provide it.

*'All your children shall be taught of God and great shall be the peace of your children.'* (Isaiah 54:13)

By Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi,  
Birmingham Progressive Synagogue





### 3. DECLARATION OF HOPE

The Declaration of Hope is a statement that serves as the Faith Alliance's 'call to action' for faith communities across the West Midlands. It is written in such a way that anyone of any faith or none can sincerely read its words and commit themselves to the long work of challenging violence and inspiring hope for the future.

The 'Declaration' was written in 2018 by the Revd Gareth Irvine, an Anglican priest in Coventry, following the murder of one of his parishioners, a 16-year-old boy. The words are dedicated to the memory of that child and are read at every Faith Alliance meeting to remember all those who have been affected by youth violence.

Take a moment to read through the 'Declaration', and, if you feel able, read the words aloud for yourself. This is the beginning of your response.

Once you have done so, there are some questions for reflection below.

**Questions for reflection:**

- + Do you know the people in your community? Can you genuinely stand with them?
- + How can you use your voice to call for an end to violence and aggression?
- + How can you work with others to make your home and streets safer?
- + How do you demonstrate the power of love and forgiveness in your own life and relationships?
- + How will you play your part?

**Today, we stand together as one community.**  
 We call for an end to the violence and aggression in our towns and cities that causes division, despair and death.  
 We live for a shared future where our homes and streets are safe places again.  
 We declare that the power of love and forgiveness is stronger than the power of fear and revenge.  
 We will not be afraid. We will each play our part.  
 We will choose to believe in hope.

© 2018 Revd Gareth Irvine, Coventry (Used with permission)



**Watch our YouTube Video**

Scan the QR code to watch our short video with the people of the West Midlands reading the Declaration of Hope



**What is your hope for the future?**

'That young people feel safe in their community and their voice be amplify.'

'Not sure, doesn't watch the news or anything, and ignores things on social media.'

'Have a really nice big house, lots of dogs, 3 kids.'







# SECTION 3:

## What does this mean for me?

**So, what next? This section provides a 'menu' of options for responding practically to this call to action.**

How we can respond depends on whether we are acting as an individual, as part of a group or on behalf of an organisation. The scale of our response also depends on the capacity of that person or group, including the availability of time, funds or other factors. While this Toolkit is written mainly for faith leaders, we want to provide recommended actions for anyone who may pick up this resource.

The following page provides readers with a table containing a number of different scenarios, each with recommended actions. Readers may find that they fall into more than one scenario, allowing them to choose from a range of options:

- + **Level 1** - All readers are encouraged to complete level 1 actions ('first steps');
- + **Level 2** - Readers may choose to also complete level 2 (intermediate) and;
- + **Level 3** - (advanced), depending on their capacity.

Each of the recommendations is supplemented by further information and examples in Section 4 (links in bold), where the latest learning and case studies are provided by way of guidance and inspiration.

Simply select which role or roles in the faith community represent you (the blue boxes) and read across to see which actions are recommended for you (the orange boxes).

We believe that everyone has a responsibility to protect and empower young people. While no one can do everything listed here, everyone can do something.

## FIRST STEPS FOR ALL

### LEVEL 1



Visit the VRP website for more information about serious youth violence and ways in which partners are working to prevent it in your area. [westmidlands-vrp.org](http://westmidlands-vrp.org)



Sign up to the VRP and/or Faith Alliance mailing lists for newsletters and updates. Contact us at [vrp@westmidlands.police.uk](mailto:vrp@westmidlands.police.uk)



Ensure you are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance and policies in your place of worship or organisation (see Sections 4.4 & 4.9).



Pray or reflect regularly on the social needs and issues in your community. Raise your voice and act for the protection and empowerment of vulnerable young people and adults (See Section 4.3).





KEY **LEVEL 2** **LEVEL 3**

	<b>Strategy (4.1)</b> Help set priorities for violence reduction in your area	<b>Training (4.2)</b> Sign up to training offers	<b>Communications (4.3)</b> Share campaign materials on social media	<b>Youth spaces (4.4)</b> Support an existing youth space or help set up a new one
I AM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC	e.g. join a stakeholder network			
I AM A YOUNG PERSON	e.g. join a youth panel		e.g. visit fearless.org	e.g. join a youth club
I AM A PARENT				
I AM A MEMBER OF A PLACE OF WORSHIP				e.g. volunteering
I HELP TO LEAD A PLACE OF WORSHIP	e.g. join the Faith Alliance or equ.		e.g. sermon topics	e.g. open a youth space
I RUN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' WORK		e.g. early years		
I RUN FAITH-BASED YOUTH WORK		e.g. childhood adversity	e.g. share youth voices	
I WORK AT A SCHOOL				
I AM A CHAPLAIN		e.g. trauma training		
I RUN A SOCIAL NEEDS PROGRAMME				e.g. include youth voice
I RUN A FAITH-BASED ORGANISATION				
I AM A SENIOR FAITH LEADER	e.g. long-term planning	e.g. for senior leaders	e.g. shape culture	e.g. have youth strategy
I AM PART OF AN INTER-FAITH NETWORK	e.g. improve cooperation			

<b>Education (4.5)</b> Access or promote educational resources and opportunities	<b>Pastoral care (4.6)</b> Access/help to expand your pastoral care provision	<b>Generous hospitality (4.7)</b> Access or help to broaden open hospitality to others in your area	<b>Nurturing families (4.8)</b> Access or develop parenting and family life support	<b>Tackling exploitation &amp; abuse (4.9)</b> Lead on improving safeguarding and accountability structures
		e.g. get to know neighbours		
e.g. via school or clubs				
			e.g. access support	
		e.g. volunteering		e.g. hold leaders to account
e.g. strengthen links				e.g. improve policies
e.g. link to local faiths				
e.g. school chaplaincy	e.g. connect with others			
	e.g. be aware of survivors			
		e.g. build social cohesion		
				e.g. lead by example
e.g. religious education		e.g. joint initiatives or events		e.g. share best practice





# SECTION 4:

## How can we make a difference?

Now that we have identified various practical actions that are recommended for you, this section gives further guidance about how you can go about them in your context.

The following outlines the learning the Faith Alliance has gathered to date about the different ways that faith communities can help to tackle the root causes of youth violence in very practical ways. Each part explores a particular Output (as identified on the Faith Alliance Theory of Change) and is broken down into particular aspects or activities, each with real-life examples of good practice from the West Midlands or elsewhere.

This is not an exhaustive list of faith-based interventions, but a demonstration of the wide variety of ways that faith communities can utilise moral, ethical or spiritual approaches to either directly or indirectly improve life chances for young people. Each case study given is from either a place of worship, a faith-based organisation, an organisation that was founded on faith values, or an organisation which is secular but supportive and open to partnering with faith communities.

You can see a complete list of members of the Faith Alliance and details of their work in our online Connect Directory here: [westmidlands-vrp.org/faith-alliance/](http://westmidlands-vrp.org/faith-alliance/)

Or scan the QR code below:







## 1. STRATEGY

Before starting out with a project or intervention, it is important to understand where your contribution fits into the wider whole and how it can complement the work of others. Having a holistic, long-term strategy that can bring together faith communities around a common goal and a shared vision is critical to making sustainable change. Faith communities have, knowingly or otherwise, been helping to tackle violence for generations, but they have often done their work in a silo and have not partnered with others, leading to an uncoordinated and arguably less effective impact.

The Faith Alliance has developed a strategy that features the following key characteristics:

### Partnership working

The Faith Alliance is a partnership of like-minded organisations working towards a common goal on an issue of shared concern. The Faith Alliance includes places of worship, faith-based organisations, statutory bodies, charitable networks, businesses and individuals, each bringing their own valuable learning, experience and expertise. Emphasis is placed on sharing resources and working together to find effective responses.

### Multi-faith network

The Faith Alliance is also intentionally multi-faith, drawing on the many local inter-faith networks that exist across the West Midlands. There are reasons for this.

- + All young people, of all faiths or none, are vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, and so it is a concern that ought to be shared by all faith communities.

- + Different faith communities have great reach into and trust within neighbourhoods. The greater the number of faith communities partnered with, the greater number of people and neighbourhoods we reach.
- + Working together builds familiarity, understanding and trust between faith communities that might not otherwise mix. This helps strengthen social cohesion, which itself helps to create a more peaceful, shared environment for young people to grow up in.

However, a commitment to working together does not mean that individual faith communities cannot organise their own meetings and discuss, pray and worship in their own particular way. It is also essential to recognise that theological differences do exist between faith communities, and space should be created where the faith groups can reflect on how social issues may look different in different communities.

### Community-led movement

The Faith Alliance is a community-led movement and is designed to enable 'system change', which means bringing about broad changes in attitudes, policies and practices across faith communities in order to meet a common challenge. We want faith communities to join the movement and invest their time and energy in it. It is also important that faith communities are seen to lead the movement, e.g. as co-chairs.

### Youth voice

It is also important to provide space for young people to have their say and to inform strategy and projects, as the group who will be impacted the most by the strategy.

### Action

The final characteristic of the Faith Alliance is a focus on action and going beyond dialogue. The issue of youth violence is too pressing to wait until systems and structures are perfect to enact projects and interventions – saving lives matters most. This is not to undermine the importance of inter-faith dialogue, which has its place, but that is not the primary objective of the Faith Alliance. An emphasis on action has meant that this Toolkit has been among the first of the Faith Alliance's priorities emerging from the pandemic.

Other examples of strategic good practice can be found elsewhere, such as in the Diocese of Southwark, London.



## 2. TRAINING

Faith leaders are regularly called on in the aftermath of violence. If faith leaders are to make an effective response, and perhaps even help prevent violence in the first place, they need to be equipped with the latest training.

One of the main concerns that faith communities have when considering engaging with young people is whether they feel insufficiently equipped or confident enough to do so. Young people often use language, terms and phrases that are unfamiliar to older generations. Other people, in light of media narratives, are fearful that engaging with young people leaves them open to a risk of being a victim of crime.

Training helps to dismantle some of these fears and reservations while also ensuring that practitioners and volunteers are equipped to manage the very real challenges and complexities of working with young people in a safe and confident manner. Below are some examples of the training that is available for faith communities in the West Midlands:

### Public health approach to violence reduction

**Provider:** West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership

**Cost:** Free

**Description:** The webinar aims to introduce learners to the public health approach and to increase awareness of the role that everyone in society can play in violence prevention and reduction. The course will cover: principles of the public health approach; an understanding of the causes and consequences of violence; addressing underlying risk factors that make violence more likely; primary, secondary and tertiary prevention; and the importance of evaluation and evidence.

### An introduction to childhood adversity

**Provider:** West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership & Barnardo's

**Cost:** Free

**Description:** This training provides an understanding of the potential impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma across the life course. The training covers how to recognise the signs of trauma behaviour while enabling an understanding of what trauma-informed and responsive practice means. It also provides insights into how an organisation can begin the journey towards a trauma-informed organisational culture.

The VRP, in partnership with local faith organisations, has adapted this training to the four largest faith communities in the West Midlands (Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism), by including scriptures, values and beliefs in the training materials. It is hoped that the adapted materials will resonate to an even greater extent with specific faith communities, in a culturally competent way.

### Trauma-informed practice

**Provider:** West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership & Barnardo's

**Cost:** Free

**Description:** This course aims to reinforce the strengths and relationship-based practice that many professionals will already engage in. The course contains a recap for those who have already completed the 'Introduction to Childhood Adversity' training. It then goes into greater detail and depth on relevant psychological theory and trauma-informed practice at an organisational level.

### Trauma-informed organisations for senior leaders

**Provider:** West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership & Barnardo's

**Cost:** Free

**Description:** This course is aimed at those senior leaders who work with organisations/services focused on children and young people and those organisations/services that work with adults. This course aims to reinforce the strengths that many organisations will have in relation to trauma-informed practice. The course will also help learners to arrive at their own solutions about ways to further implement and embed a trauma-informed organisational culture within their services and working environments.

### Working with trauma in early years

**Provider:** West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership & Barnardo's

**Cost:** Free

**Description:** This training enables practitioners to support children in identifying how to stay safe and encourage them to share when they may be struggling. It aims to support practitioners in understanding signs of trauma and how it may present in the early years.

### Mentors in violence prevention (MVP)

**Provider:** West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership

**Cost:** Free

**Description:** This programme is designed to help young people speak out against bullying, violence and abusive behaviour. MVP improves the culture inside any organisation or community. MVP works because young people become the trainers and influencers. No longer are teachers the only ones



who manage negative behaviour. With MVP, it is the pupils themselves who play just as big a part and ensure that good behaviour exists within their school and local community. The programme helps to reduce the number of temporary and permanent school exclusions by providing young people with leadership skills and challenging unacceptable behaviours.

**Youth violence awareness**

**Provider:** Power the Fight  
**Cost:** See website Training below



**Description:** This training is for anyone who interacts with young people or makes decisions affecting young people, whether you are a parent or carer, church or faith group, school or college or statutory or voluntary organisation. For church and faith groups, we offer a specific training course called 'Enabling churches'. This is a six-module course, with an additional 'reflection session' to embed learning.

For more information about this course, as well as our other training options, please see the website: [www.powerthefight.org.uk/what-we-do/training](http://www.powerthefight.org.uk/what-we-do/training)

**Exploitation and county lines**

**Provider:** Clewer Initiative  
**Cost:** Free



**Description:** This is designed as a resource to enable churches and communities to understand and raise awareness of the scale of the problem of county lines and spot the signs of its presence. It also looks at ways of building resilience in our communities with an emphasis on the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The course is

in four modules, including digital stories based on personal experience, group activities, supporting information and biblical reflections. The modules are: Understanding county lines; Detection of county lines; Protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults; and, Building resilience.

Link: [www.theclewerinitiative.org/training-courses/breaking-county-lines](http://www.theclewerinitiative.org/training-courses/breaking-county-lines)

**Safeguarding**

Across the West Midlands region there are seven statutory Safeguarding Children Partnerships providing a wide arrange of multi-agency safeguarding training for practitioners working with children, young people and families, together with on-line safeguarding guidance, policy and procedures. Please see below links to access local safeguarding training in your area;

- + **Coventry**  
[www.coventry.gov.uk/cscsp](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/cscsp)
- + **Birmingham**  
[www.lscpbirmingham.org.uk/](http://www.lscpbirmingham.org.uk/)
- + **Solihull**  
[www.safeguardingsolihull.org.uk/lscp/](http://www.safeguardingsolihull.org.uk/lscp/)
- + **Dudley**  
[www.safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/safeguarding](http://www.safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/safeguarding)
- + **Sandwell**  
[www.sandwellcsp.org.uk/](http://www.sandwellcsp.org.uk/)
- + **Walsall**  
[www.go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-safeguarding-partnership](http://www.go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-safeguarding-partnership)
- + **Wolverhampton**  
[www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk/](http://www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk/)



**3. COMMUNICATIONS**

By virtue of being embedded into the physical and social landscape of local neighbourhoods, faith communities have a powerful voice that can be used to shape perceptions of issues and responses. Faith communities can also play a valuable role as bridges between local people and local authorities.

Faith communities have great potential in broadcasting hope that challenges voices that say that violence among young people is inevitable or normal. Faith leaders have an influential platform to mobilise their communities, and the general public, to say that 'enough is enough' and that actions must be taken to prevent the loss of young lives. Faith leaders can provide a vision, based on scriptures and beliefs, that can inspire individuals to play their part.

The following examples show that there are many ways that faith communities can use communication to serve young people.

**Prayer**

Prayer is at the heart of many faiths, and many people of faith believe that prayer changes things. It is important that people of faith are properly informed about what is going on in their communities and are given the most up-to-date information so their prayers can be targeted and specific. Prayer is a way of bringing the divine into the equation through which we can aspire to more than we can achieve on our own.

**Youth voice**

Young people need to be at the front and centre of responses to issues that primarily affect them. Providing a space for young people to share their views and shape narratives empowers young people to know that their voice carries authority and can inspire action.

**CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL**



Project name:

'PRAY FOR PEACE' MUSIC VIDEO

Location(s):

COVENTRY

Contact:

ADMIN@CNCS.SCHOOL



WATCH THE YouTube VIDEO BY SCANNING THIS CODE

At Cardinal Newman Catholic School (CNCS), we created an anti-knife crime music video called 'Pray for Peace'. The music video was written and performed by Adam Hedge and students from CNCS. Adam is a musical mentor at CNCS and is also a local rapper known as 'ShadowCV'. The song has almost 13,000 views on YouTube and has been used for a wide range of events including a peace seminar at Coventry Cathedral.

Music video: [youtu.be/ekYdVDh8HCU](https://youtu.be/ekYdVDh8HCU)

The objective was to spread awareness of knife crime, and to give the students the experience of being involved in the production and inspire them to achieve through hard work and dedication.

Adam has also dissected the lyrics of the song and created lyric writing teaching resources for key stage 3 and key stage 4 students.



Advocacy

Sometimes great change can be achieved when communities mobilise to address local issues. However, there are times when communities need to engage with those with power and influence in local and national government, particularly when it comes to changing legislation.

Power the Fight says that 'writing to politicians is a great way to raise awareness of violence affecting young people in your local area. It's quick and easy, plus it helps your MP to represent you in Parliament. You can find out more information about how this can help, as well as a template letter, on our website: [www.powerthefight.org.uk/what-we-do/resources](http://www.powerthefight.org.uk/what-we-do/resources)

Campaigns and raising awareness

Faith communities can change attitudes and even behaviours through the effective use of campaigns. By raising awareness of sometimes hidden issues in the community, faith communities can help remove shame or stigma, and signpost to sources of compassion and support. Over time, negative behaviours are challenged and culture changes.



GREEN LANE MASJID AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (GLMCC)



Project name:  
DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICE

Location(s):  
BIRMINGHAM

Contact:  
MUHAMMAD@GREENLANEMASJID.ORG  
(HEAD OF YOUTH & WELFARE)  
SHAMIDA@GREENLANEMASJID.ORG  
(DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT WORKER)

Website:  
WWW.GREENLANEMASJID.ORG



Green Lane Masjid in Birmingham ran an awareness campaign encouraging women affected by domestic abuse to seek support from a dedicated female, Muslim case worker.

The domestic abuse project is a women-centred service that provides holistic and practical support to women and children facing domestic abuse and violence. It's a service run by a Muslim case worker who provides emotional support, signposting and a safe space for Muslim women to disclose domestic abuse.

Information and guidance

Once an issue is identified in the community, it is necessary that members of faith communities are provided with information to enable them to understand it and are equipped with guidance about how to effectively respond in an appropriate way. While resources from local authorities or charities are good, resources that are written in the language of a particular faith community are particularly effective.

- + Bahu Trust's Toolkit on understanding and responding to serious and organised crime for Muslim communities [www.bahustrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A\\_Community\\_Guide\\_to\\_Serious\\_\\_Organised\\_Crime.pdf](http://www.bahustrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A_Community_Guide_to_Serious__Organised_Crime.pdf)
- + Bringing Hope's Toolkit on responding to youth violence for Christian communities [www.bringinghope.co.uk](http://www.bringinghope.co.uk)



Counter-narratives

Faith communities can use speech, art or symbolic gestures to counter negative narratives in the media and engage not just the head, but also the heart and soul of the listener or onlooker.

In the West Midlands, the 'Declaration of Hope' is one such counter-narrative, which has inspired many to take action on youth violence (see Section 2). There are many other examples too such as the inspiring Knife Angel statue that has been on a tour of cathedrals in England (including Coventry and Birmingham).







## 4. YOUTH SPACES

**Opening a space within a place of worship where any young person can be welcome, feel safe and be supported is a significant and much-needed contribution that faith communities can make in aid of reducing violence.**

In the context of austerity over the last decade, many youth centres across the country have closed and have disappeared as sources of refuge and safety for young people during out-of-school hours. The charity YMCA found that in England there had been an average 77% cut in local authority spending on youth services. In the West Midlands there was an 88% cut (YMCA, 2022). Even in Birmingham, where a local authority-run youth service remains, there is insufficient resource to meet the needs of the many young people in the city (WMVRP, 2021).

This is where faith communities, by bringing together their ability to provide protective factors with their possession of community assets and resources (especially buildings), can be a source of great blessing to young people in the community. This section spells out what makes for a good youth space, and how you can go about setting one up in your faith setting.

### Starting out

#### What is a youth space?

Put simply, a youth space is somewhere safe where a young person can simply be themselves. It is an environment where young people can feel at home and know that they are truly valued and welcome. It is a space where young people can broaden their horizons through new opportunities, activities and experiences in a supervised environment. It is a place where young people can develop their interests, character and identity without fear, pressure or coercion. It is a space created and set aside for young people, with young people and by young people.

Faith-based youth spaces may or may not have a proselytising element; either way it is important this is made clear to young people and parents. The guidance below is for youth spaces which exist in faith settings, not principally for proselytism, but to meet the social needs of all young people.

#### What are the needs and opportunities in your area?

Before setting up a new youth space, it is important to assess the specific needs and opportunities in your local community:

- + What youth spaces already exist and can be better supported?
- + What gaps in youth provision are there that need to be filled?
- + Is there a particular group, cohort or demographic of young people that is currently being under-served?

Mapping what support is available to young people in your area is not only useful in order to avoid duplication, but also to identify possible partnerships and collaborations. Every community has different needs and opportunities and so requires a specific, tailored response. A youth space need not be open every day of the week but it should be open enough to meet the local need.

#### What can you offer?

Once you have identified your community's need and assets, the next step is to explore what you can bring to the table. For example, do you have:

- + a suitable building that can be used as a venue for a youth space? If not, is there another place of worship you can partner with?
- + access to youth workers or a group of volunteers who can help supervise the youth space? If not, are you aware of a youth organisation that you can work with?

- + robust policies in place (e.g. safeguarding, health and safety) to make sure that the youth space is safe for all? If not, what support can you get from your denomination or faith network?
- + funding needed to cover the cost of staff, equipment and refreshments? If not, what funding bodies can you apply to, or are there other organisations you can contact that will support an application (such as your local VRP or voluntary support service)?
- + ideas about the type of youth space you wish to offer, e.g. open-access, detached, activity-focused, faith-based? If not, what other organisations can you learn from and speak to?

The rest of this section will help you answer these questions and provide guidance on what makes for a great youth space.

### Some key principles

The following list of principles was identified by members of the Faith Alliance who joined together to form a working group on youth spaces, sharing best practice and experience from across the West Midlands. This is a list of things that they think make for a great youth space in a faith setting. This should not be considered as an exhaustive list.

A great youth space...

- + **is safe** – First and foremost, a youth space needs to be a safe place, where parents/carers can be confident that their child will be looked after and kept safe, in line with safeguarding policies and procedures.
- + **instils values** – Young people are taught and shown by example from a young age what it means to be a good human being.
- + **educates and provides purpose** – Young people learn the consequences of their wise and unwise actions in a safe and nurturing environment and explore their purpose in life.

- + **is trusted in the community** – Local young people and adults are aware of the youth space and support its role in the life of the community.
- + **is supervised by well-trained, responsible adults** – Those helping with the youth space are well equipped to safeguard young people, to understand the impact of trauma and to respond effectively to needs as they arise.
- + **takes a relational approach** – Underpinning the youth spaces are not just activities and opportunities, but strong, consistent and reliable mentoring relationships between responsible adults and young people.
- + **is youth-led** – Young people are given the opportunity to have their voice heard and make decisions about how their space is designed and used.
- + **welcomes those with lived experience** – Mentors who have experienced adversity or have reformed after having previously been involved in crime are welcomed and their ability to empathise and relate to young people is recognised and valued.
- + **is local** – Young people need to be able to access the youth space at their point of need, in their local community. Some young people are fearful of travelling to other communities.
- + **is in for the long-term** – It is not 'here today and gone tomorrow' because young people need to know that they have access to consistent, sustainable and safe people and places.
- + **is consistent** – Whether daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly, young people can be confident in when the youth space will next be open and when they will have access to a responsible adult.

- + **is fun!** – Young people are given the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of fun activities, such as sport. Active Black Country has produced a Toolkit to support sports activities in faith venues **GOGA Toolkit For Faith Centres Brochure FINAL.pdf** ([activeblackcountry.co.uk](http://activeblackcountry.co.uk))

### Checklist

As well as having good underlying principles, it is also critical that a youth space has the structures in place so that it is both viable and safe for all involved. The following is a checklist of things that we highly recommend are in place. More in-depth guidance has been provided by the Department for Education here: **Keeping children safe: code of practice (publishing.service.gov.uk)**.

- ✓ An identification of need and opportunity  
There has to be a sufficient need for a new youth space to be established. If the community is already well served by youth services or has very few young people, it may be worth exploring a different activity in the community (see rest of Section 4).
- ✓ Venue  
There needs to be a suitable venue that is secure and in good repair and has enough space for activities.
- ✓ Staff and/or volunteers  
There need to be enough paid staff members and/or volunteers to ensure a good adult:young person ratio (depending on venue and activity) and supervise young people.
- ✓ Training  
It is critical that adult staff or volunteers are trained in the latest safeguarding guidance and other relevant best practice (see Section 4.2 for examples of training available).

- ✓ Health and safety policy  
It is essential that there is a comprehensive health and safety policy, with risk assessments that are completed for every session and updated regularly.
- ✓ Safeguarding policy  
The youth space must have a robust safeguarding policy that is read, understood and enacted by all staff, volunteers, parents and young people. All staff and volunteers should be safely recruited (DBS checks etc.).
- ✓ Data protection policy  
There must be the necessary policies and practices in place to keep young people's personal data secure.
- ✓ Insurance  
Any activity must have public liability and any other relevant insurance.
- ✓ Funding  
It is essential that there is sufficient funding to cover all anticipated costs of staffing, equipment and refreshments.
- ✓ Publicity  
There should be a range of means of making the youth space known in the community e.g. word of mouth, flyers, social media, website.
- ✓ Security  
The security of the venue must be considered and equipment acquired to make it safer, where necessary, e.g. knife arches, bollards.
- ✓ Food  
Many young people appreciate free food! If you are preparing food at the venue, you must have food hygiene training. Be considerate of the dietary requirements of the young people (e.g. allergies, religious prohibitions, culturally appropriate food).



**Safeguarding resources**

Safeguarding is critical. We recommend you read page 78 of this Toolkit for further safeguarding resources and guidance.

**Evaluation and funding**

Evaluation, including keeping track of the project and its outcomes (e.g. number of young people attending), is very important. Robust evaluation enables the collection of best practice and learning, and assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and can unlock future sustainable funding.

Police and crime commissioners, VRPs, local authorities and others have budgets to commission violence reduction interventions and projects. Funds can also be accessed through businesses (corporate social responsibility budgets) or grant-making trusts and charities.

Different organisations also provide training for faith communities on how to write funding bids. For example, Near Neighbours has produced the following guidance [www.near-neighbours.org.uk/s/Writing-For-Grants-Workshop-for-website.pdf](http://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/s/Writing-For-Grants-Workshop-for-website.pdf)

**WOLVERHAMPTON WRESTLING CLUB, BASED IN GURU NANAK SATSANG SIKH GURDWARA, WOLVERHAMPTON**



Project name:  
**SPORTS DIVERSION AND IMPACT PROGRAMME**  
**MULTI SPORTS AND MENTAL HEALTH**

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Location(s):  
**WOLVERHAMPTON**

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Contact:  
**WOLVERHAMPTONWRESTLINGCLUB@GMAIL.COM**

During the pandemic, we loaned club equipment to vulnerable individuals to allow home workouts, including skipping ropes, cones, frisbees, tennis balls, garden shovels and seeds. Over time, the programme extended to support mental health through physical and online classes. As restrictions began lifting, we offered sessions in outdoor spaces and some limited indoor space, to run multi-sports, including, boxing, tennis, football, cricket, wrestling, cycling and archery.

As we have been running this work for decades from a place of worship, we have the expertise and experience/knowledge to make a real difference in our communities. We empower our volunteers to bring ideas and make decisions. Not being able to work face to face was challenging for our members/community, but having video sessions worked well.

**GREEN LANE MASJID AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (GLMCC)**



Project name:  
**LINK UP YOUTH CLUB AND FOOTBALL CLUB**

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Location(s):  
**SMALL HEATH, BIRMINGHAM**

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Contact:  
**INFO@GREENLANEMASJID.ORG**

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Website:  
**WWW.GREENLANEMASJID.ORG**

A free weekly youth club for boys/girls aged 11-19, we run with an open-door policy encouraging at-risk youth to attend in the hope of changing mindsets within a safe space.

Every week, teen boys and girls enjoy social activities as well as workshops on changing mindsets. The youth engagement workers offer group support as well as one-to-one mentoring for select attendees who have been identified as at risk. We also ran excursions throughout the summer for the youth club members. Some of the youth attending have gone on to become regular volunteers at GLM. The youth club has attracted approximately 300 unique youths aged 11-19, male and female.

Every week, 40+ boys aged 5-16 participate in sessions, keeping them fit and active, developing technical skills, and coaching to become team players, disciplined, and respectful.





## SAFE SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Project name:  
**SAFE SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Location(s):  
**BIRMINGHAM**

Contact:  
**INFO@SAFESPACES.ORG.UK**

Website:  
**WWW.SAFESPACES.ORG.UK**

A developing network of youth projects across Birmingham that provide regular open-access safe spaces for young people, based in their local community.

Core to Safe Spaces are the wellbeing and flourishing of young people, by helping them to develop positive relationships, identity, self-esteem, resilience and aspirations. These regular safe spaces mean that young people have trusted adults whom they can talk to for support and advice.

Safe Spaces is developed from a Christian vision and ethos and seeks to be an inclusive network that embraces other groups and organisations that may not identify as Christian. The network is held together by core values and principles, 'the 5Ps' to which each Safe Space will sign up. These are:

- **Place** – An accessible space open at the same time on a regular basis for young people to engage with
- **People** – A space that is open to young people in the neighbourhood regardless of circumstances and/or situation, facilitated by a suitable ratio of DBS-checked staff and/or volunteers.
- **Presence** – A place where all young people can feel safe, actively listen to one another, and form friendships and relationships.
- **Provision** – Positive relationships and activities that engage young people. We seek the holistic development of young people physically, economically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. We support and signpost young people to more specialised provision where appropriate.
- **Participation** – We encourage the expression of unique talents, experiences and skills in safe spaces or in wider community projects and activities.

Many church-based, voluntary sector and small youth organisations can often operate alone and be the only youth provision in their community. The network provides a space where individual organisations connect and support one another.

## THE MESSAGE TRUST

Project name:  
**MESSAGE BUS**

Location(s):  
**WEST MIDLANDS (BUS IS COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE ONLY)**

Contact:  
**WESTMIDLANDS@MESSAGE.ORG.UK**

Website:  
**WWW.MESSAGE.ORG.UK/MESSAGE-BUS**

The Message Bus is a state-of-the-art mobile youth centre designed to engage young people, with help from the local church. We have reports of anti-social behaviour decreasing in areas where the Message Bus is present.

Challenges have included finding funding for projects or paying for sessions to take place, and persuading volunteers in churches that they can do youth work.



## 5. EDUCATION

The relationship between education and faith communities is long and well developed.

One obvious example of faith communities and education working together is in the many faith schools that exist. While these are important parts of the educational landscape in Britain today, they are by no means the only way that faith communities and schools can work together to reduce violence through education.

### Faith schools

Faith schools enable young people to be taught in an environment where faith values and principles are not only part of the curriculum but part of the ethos of the school.



## GRACE FOUNDATION



Project name:  
**GRACE FOUNDATION**

Location(s):  
**VARIOUS SCHOOLS ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS**

Contact:  
**INFO@GRACE-FOUNDATION.ORG.UK**

Website:  
**WWW.GRACE-FOUNDATION.ORG.UK**

We hope to transform the lives of young people and their families through holistic education. Our holistic vision is designed to support the aspirational, relational and spiritual needs of students and their families. We work through these three key themes:

- **Developing character and values** – Our goal is to help students thrive by raising their aspirations, fostering respect, building resilience and hope, and empower them to grow by serving others.
- **Building healthy relationships** – Our goal is to help students learn to value themselves, enable them to identify the qualities of healthy relationships, foster digital relationship skills, grow in wisdom for intimacy and be equipped for long-term committed relationships.
- **Understanding Christian perspectives** – Our goal is to help students explore the basics of Christian belief, discover how faith works in practice and understand why the Christian faith matters.

### 2020-21 ACADEMIC YEAR AT A GLANCE

<b>07</b> Partner Schools	<b>6000</b> Student reach & families	<b>197K</b> Student engagements
<b>6820+</b> Family support interventions	<b>3218+</b> Support group places taken	<b>1287+</b> Mentoring sessions



## THE KING'S CE SCHOOL, WOLVERHAMPTON



Project name:

**RESTORATIVE PRACTICE (RP)**

Location(s):

**WOLVERHAMPTON**

Contact:

**J.KUDLACIK@KINGSWOLVERHAMPTON.CO.UK**  
(SCHOOL CHAPLAIN)

**ADMIN@KINGSWOLVERHAMPTON.CO.UK**

Website:

**WWW.KINGSWOLVERHAMPTON.CO.UK**

Central to our school vision is the belief that all are created in God's image and our intention to live together as a unified, respectful and harmonious community. Living alongside each other day by day can sometimes present challenges, and sometimes relationships need mending.

Restorative practice is when we work together to repair those broken relationships. The emphasis is not on blame and judgement, not even always on agreeing about what has happened, but seeking a hopeful and positive way forwards together where each party is heard and valued.

It helps if a mediator and a safe-space culture are available, which has time and staffing implications.

Most importantly, our students have the chance to put things right and then to move on with a clean slate. The RP conversations are also an opportunity for building the confidence of our young people. Often poor choices stem from low self-confidence, and a chance to encourage and say what we appreciate about the young person makes a big difference to their future behaviour and choices.

### Managing conflict

While conflict is an inevitable part of life in a society containing different views and opinions, violence is not. It is critical for the next generation to understand those who are different from them and to engage constructively with those with whom they disagree. In addition to the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme, there are other programmes and approaches out there:



## SALTMINE TRUST



Project name:

**SWITCH UP THEATRE PRODUCTION**

Location(s):

**SECONDARY SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE UK**

Contact:

**CREATIVE@SALTMINE.ORG**

Website:

**WWW.SALTMINETRUST.ORG.UK**

Saltmine Trust is a Christian charity and theatre company, inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus. We describe what we do as 'faith motivated arts'.

Switch Up is an hour-long anti-knife crime production and a 50-minute interactive workshop, which also focuses on the interrelated issues of gang culture and self-identity.

We follow teenagers, Dan and Jay, about to leave school and making plans for their future. Will they be able to 'pave their own path', or will pressures and tensions dictate their choices? Switch Up aims to encourage young people from school years 7-13 to make informed and positive life choices. To date, it has been delivered to over 21,000 pupils in 70 schools.

- 'Many students have been able to change their opinions on risk taking, which is evident in their personal development study.' (Dudley Borough school)

### Understanding risks through creativity

Sometimes vulnerable young people may not be aware of the dangers that exist in society; others may not even be aware that they are being exploited. Raising awareness of the risks of involvement in gangs and crime among young people is an important way to empower young people to avoid making unwise decisions. The arts and media, formats that are familiar to young people through social media, are particularly effective ways of engaging young people.

### Tackling exclusions

We know that excluding a child from school increases their vulnerability to getting involved in criminal activity. 25% of young people in custody today have been excluded from school at some point in their life (compared to 1 in 1000 of the whole secondary school population) (Department for Education, 2019). The West Midlands has a higher rate of permanent secondary school exclusion and unauthorised absences than the rest of England (VRP SNA 2022). It is important, therefore, to find ways of keeping young people in education and providing the individual support they require to learn in a way that works best for them. Faith-based organisations are finding innovative ways to reduce exclusions and give students a second chance.

The West Midlands VRP has also produced an Education Toolkit, which gives guidance to schools on how to better support vulnerable young people and avoid exclusions [westmidlands-vrp.org/app/uploads/2020/12/VRU-Toolkit-Website.pdf](https://westmidlands-vrp.org/app/uploads/2020/12/VRU-Toolkit-Website.pdf)





## SOLIHULL AND DISTRICT HEBREW CONGREGATION

Project name:  
**OPEN DOORS – EDUCATIONAL VISITS TO A SYNAGOGUE**

Location(s):  
**SOLIHULL**

Contact:  
**MARINA KAPLAN (PROJECT MANAGER)**  
**MARINA.KAPLAN@ME.COM**  
**OFFICE@SOLIHULLSHUL.ORG**

Website:  
**WWW.SOLIHULLSHUL.ORG**

Over the last 20 years, thousands of children and young people have visited our place of worship. We offer local school children and other organised groups the opportunity to visit our synagogue, learn more about how we practise our faith, and help develop respect and tolerance for all citizens of the United Kingdom.

Our mission is to search for shared activities and experiences with others regardless of their beliefs to encourage visible unity and dialogue on faith, ethics and action. We help young people shape their own identity through understanding commonalities and differences.

For years, security issues were the main concerns for the Jewish community in the UK. As a result of the constant security threat and antisemitism, synagogues have become unreachable for non-Jewish members. We offer young people and adults a unique opportunity to learn about our history, culture and values by opening our doors.

### Religious education

Contrary to secularising trends in the UK, the world as a whole is becoming more, not less religious (Pew Research Center, 2015). Learning about different religions in the school context is important in preparing young people to better understand others' beliefs and respect those who think differently. Education is key to breaking down the ignorance that can lead to fear and hatred, and sadly even violence. Learning to appreciate and protect religious diversity is therefore an important part of creating a peaceful society.



## KICK



Project name:  
**SOLUTION-FOCUSED MENTORING**

Location(s):  
**A NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS**

Contact:  
**ANDREWMARTIN@KICK.ORG.UK**  
**OFFICE@KICK.ORG.UK**

Website:  
**WWW.KICK.ORG.UK**

Statistics highlight the plight of many young people:

- One in three 15-year olds have a mental health problem (MFHA)
- Three in five 16-24-year olds feel disillusioned with life (ONS)

In order to combat this, we use a solutions-focused approach in mentoring to develop young people and see them find the solutions they need for the challenges they face in their bespoke situations. We see first hand how mentoring has the potential to refocus attention to an individual's own strengths and can empower them to make positive decisions for themselves that will build confidence and responsibility.

The biggest challenge is funding. As a not-for-profit charity, KICK requires substantial funding to be able to meet the needs of the large volume of young people who need our help.

### Mentoring

Having access to a responsible adult and positive role model who can mentor a child through the ups and downs of life is a great resource. Schools can be a setting where such mentoring can take place.





## BAHU TRUST



Project name:  
**EMPOWERING FUTURES**

Location(s):  
**BIRMINGHAM**

Contact:  
**INFO@BAHUTRUST.ORG**

Website:  
**WWW.BAHUTRUST.ORG/  
EMPOWERINGFUTURES**

Developed in consultation with local young people, Empowering Futures is a unique and innovative youth leadership programme delivered by the Bahu Trust.

Empowering Futures trains young people to improve their confidence and understanding of the complexities of violence and to take ownership of resolutions. The programme includes sessions on conflict resolution, understanding anger, peer-to-peer mediation, gang culture, guns and knife crime awareness, community cohesion and drugs awareness. The programme also sees young people take part in local social action projects to instil a sense of community ownership and local empowerment.

### Approach:

- developed in consultation with young people
- delivered in a 'faith-inspired' approach, not 'faith based'
- earned trust by creating a safe and confidential space for open and honest discussions.

### Impacts:

- Participants avoided being expelled from college and either went on to higher education or found themselves employment.
- Young people were trained and equipped to have greater and positive peer-to-peer influence.
- Young people gained the confidence to be able to walk away from becoming involved in crime.
- Young people had the confidence to take responsibility and find resolutions of issues in their local community.
- Young people showed positive appreciation of their own area and the will to make a positive change.

## Social action

Young people are increasingly finding that their voice and action matter; protests for climate justice are a good example. Young people are learning that they too are active stakeholders in society and can help make decisions that affect their futures. The potential for mobilising this same energy into increasing community safety and reducing crime is great and much needed. Faith communities can provide opportunities for young people to take greater responsibility for their local areas and become active citizens in society.



## GREEN LANE MASJID AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (GLMCC)



Project name:  
**GLM 309 SCOUTS**

Location(s):  
**GLMCC**

Contact:  
**INFO@GREENLANEMASJID.ORG**

Website:  
**WWW.GREENLANEMASJID.ORG**

The 309 group is one of the largest scout groups in the region. Each week, we help over 120 young people aged 6-18 enjoy fun and adventure while developing the skills they need to succeed, now and in the future. Young people in the Scouts take part in an exciting programme of activities from kayaking to coding. They develop character skills like resilience, initiative and tenacity; employability skills such as leadership, teamwork and problem solving; and practical skills like cooking and first aid.

And research proves it really works. A 2018 report stated; Scouts are 17% more likely to show leadership skills and work well in teams. They're a third more likely to support their communities too.

## Extra-curricular

While formal education helps develop a young person's mind, extra-curricular activities often play an important role in developing young people's sense of identity, character and social skills. Through school and extra-curricular activities together, young people have access to a more holistic education, which can prepare them for adult life. Faith communities are well placed to either provide or host such activities.





## THE FAITH & BELIEF FORUM



Project name:

**WEST MIDLANDS YOUTH INTERFAITH HUB**

Location(s):

**WEST MIDLANDS, BIRMINGHAM**

Contact:

**INFO@FAITHBELIEFFORUM.ORG**

Website:

**WWW.FAITHBELIEFFORUM.ORG**

The Youth Interfaith Hub is a group of young leaders from a wide range of faiths and belief backgrounds, who are spearheading an interfaith movement in the Midlands – with youth at the forefront. The aim of this project is to empower young people to be confident in their faith and work collectively for the common good of all.

We are establishing a presence in the West Midlands. Our first event was during Interfaith Week in November 2021. The young people wanted to do something for asylum seekers and refugees. We decided to cook together and feed people in need.

These young people will be leading in building networks and skills for other young people to effect real change in our communities, in their careers and in the political arena. They also represent over 700 ParliaMentors alumni of the Faith & Belief Forum programmes in the UK and abroad and are consulted on key decisions at F&BF.

## Leadership

To give young people the responsibility of leadership tells them that they matter and have an important role in a community. Faith-based projects in the West Midlands provide opportunities for young people to have leadership experience.

Near Neighbour's Catalyst leadership programme is another good example of training young people to be positive role models in their communities. [www.near-neighbours.org.uk/catalyst](http://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/catalyst)



## HOPE COVENTRY



Project name:

**HOPE CONNECT**

Location(s):

**COVENTRY**

Contact:

**JESS@HOPECOVENTRY.ORG.UK**

**OFFICE@HOPECOVENTRY.ORG.UK**

Website:

**WWW.HOPECOVENTRY.ORG.UK**

HOPE Connect links Coventry communities and churches to support one another. As part of this, volunteers join the Connect team to enhance their employability skills, improve their wellbeing, and give back to the community. Volunteers all have very different abilities and interests. A menu of tasks is provided to enable them to tailor their activities to fit them.

Volunteer reliability can be a challenge, as many are living with variable health conditions, including poor mental health. Lots of flexibility is provided to suit their needs. Volunteers can require a high level of supervision, guidance and encouragement.

Younger volunteers have gained confidence in themselves and their abilities to learn new skills successfully. Some have low self-esteem on arrival and are surprised by being somewhere where they are praised and thanked. Volunteers have gone on to employment using skills they have learned at HOPE Connect, and teenage volunteers (age 16-17) have been able to refer to their experience in personal statements for university or college.

## Employability

Youth unemployment, which is currently widespread, leads many young people to feel that there is little hope for the future. It might lead some to consider illegal and dangerous ways of making money. It is therefore important that faith communities do what they can to create employment and (preferably paid at the Real Living Wage) work experience opportunities for young people that can give them experience of the workplace and raise their aspirations for the future.

## 'Step together' initiative

The Step Together initiative is a new project commissioned by the Home Office, and currently being piloted in the West Midlands. The project involves detached youth workers chaperoning young people on routes to and from schools at the beginning and end of the school day, when it is known that young people are most vulnerable to violence. The youth workers provide a listening ear to students and help them to feel safer, while also deterring crime and anti-social behaviour. There are currently 19 routes across the West Midlands, often in areas of deprivation and where there are large secondary schools.

Along many of the routes, can be found different places of worship that have the potential to provide spaces where young people can relax, eat together and socialise in safety after school. We are actively engaging with places of worship near the Step Together routes and exploring how they can support the young people who travel past their doors. For more information about the Step Together programme and where the routes are located, please see our website [www.westmidlands-vrp.org](http://www.westmidlands-vrp.org)





## 6. PASTORAL CARE

**Being able to provide pastoral care that is trauma-informed and culturally competent is an important step on the path to coping with the potential impacts of trauma and adversity.**

Pastoral care does not usually diagnose or provide treatment for severe mental health conditions, which are best provided by medical professionals. However, signposting between pastoral care providers and medical professionals is recommended.

Rather, pastoral care in a safe space, characterised by listening and non-judgement, can help individuals with their emotional health and to build resilience in times of stress and uncertainty. Pastoral care is not about converting others to one's own faith. In short, as one psychologist says, not everyone can provide therapy, but all can be therapeutic in their interactions with others (Dr Karen Treisman).

Faith communities have been providing support to individuals and communities for generations, helping to provide hope in what could otherwise be desperate situations. This support can and does take many forms, in many different settings, and can be tailored to the needs of the individual. Together they help to address the root causes of vulnerability and violence therapeutically.

### CHAPLAINCY

**An introduction to chaplaincy by the Reverend David Butterworth, District Officer Birmingham, Methodist Church in Britain and Lead Interfaith Chaplain, NEC Group**

'The ministry of Chaplaincy has been around for millennia in one form or another. However, more and more these days, places of care often call upon chaplains to help



others. Most universities, hospitals, prisons, and armed and emergency services have a long history of chaplains being on call as an intrinsic part of holistic wellbeing. Chaplains can also be found in businesses, police stations, retail centres, schools, housing associations, sports clubs, retail centres and some communities.

Often people think the term 'chaplain' comes from the root form of 'chapel' This is quite wrong. The term has its root in the word 'cloak' and the medieval Latin word 'capella'. Capella means 'little cloak'. There's a beautiful story about St. Martin of Tours (316-397AD), who used his sword to cut his 'capella' to offer half to a freezing beggar who was only wearing rags. He became very well known for this act of kindness to an unknown person.

Increasingly, pastoral groups are leaving their Faith buildings and offering kindnesses and support to 'anyone in need' #OutsideFaithWalls. Sometimes, this is in groups of a mix of Faith positions or from a core group – but all are offering to help and signpost community members to places of support and safety – being the glue of the community.'



Project name:  
**WMP MULTI-FAITH CHAPLAINCY TEAM**

Location(s):  
**WEST MIDLANDS**

We have a team of over 100 voluntary multi-faith chaplains who are providing support, listening ears and encouragement to officers, staff and their families. We are training the officers and staff to understand the faiths and protocols linked to the six major faiths in a number of settings including classroom training, DVD resources and team engagement. We have resources and capabilities to connect the police with the diverse, multi-faith communities where we live and work. Our team of chaplains provides an input into our cadet teams and police departments, which includes assistance in such areas as youth crime, personal development, wellbeing and hate crime.

Through both the WMP cadets and the police family liaison officers, our team is able to relate and support numerous young people both personally and through their faith groups.



Project name:  
**YELLOW RIBBON COMMUNITY CHAPLAINCY**

Location(s):  
**WALSALL AND WIDER WEST MIDLANDS**

Contact:  
**INFO@YELLOW-RIBBON.ORG**

We are a supported housing and community chaplaincy charity. We house ex-offenders and homeless men in Shrewsbury, Telford, Walsall and Stafford. We run a programme of weekly workshops and courses, including wellbeing, drug and alcohol recovery, employability, the '12 Steps' course and one-to-one mentoring. We work with prison staff, prison chaplains and probation services in the region to help to identify potential clients and provide them with mentoring before and after release.

We offer support to all, regardless of faith. The men who come to us find a community of support, consistent relationships and an opportunity to explore the Christian faith. Many are estranged from families and/or come from communities where violence and substance misuse are prevalent. Belonging to a church family provides our service users with a greater chance of sustaining recovery.

A key aspect of what we do is to offer the men a chance to see a different way of life based on hope and community. The courses we run, some led by individuals with lived experience, are designed to help them see that they have worth and the ability to change the direction of their lives.



## COVENTRY STREET PASTORS



Project name:  
**COVENTRY STREET PASTORS**

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Location(s):  
**COVENTRY CITY CENTRE**

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Contact:  
**COVENTRY@STREETPASTORS.ORG.UK**

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Website:  
**WWW.STREETPASTORS.ORG/LOCATIONS/COVENTRY**

We are caring, listening, helping and patrolling the centre of Coventry from 10pm until 3am every Friday and Saturday night, ensuring that the safety of those out in the night-time economy. We pick up bottles so they can't be used as weapons, give out water and lollipops, help people find lost friends and find taxis. We are called by police and door staff to stay with people until they are in a safe space, and we listen to people. We calm people down, help to de-escalate situations and are a non-judgemental group on the streets.

Most of our challenges currently come from young people who have missed out on two years of socialising. They are not streetwise and are getting themselves into difficult situations. For us, the solution is to be a calm presence, talking, explaining and giving advice: a responsible adult on the street. Our impact is seen in our relationship with young people out enjoying the night-time economy. They trust and respect us, but, more importantly, they know we are a safe haven when they get into distress.



### 'Detached' pastoral support

Some pastoral support is offered in a 'detached' way, that is outside formal institutions that meet in indoor venues. This form of support is more mobile, flexible and responsive to rapidly changing needs and risks. One context where this form of pastoral support is well suited is on the streets, particularly during the night-time economy, where there are many vulnerable people, such as the homeless, sex workers and intoxicated party-goers. The prevalence of alcohol and drugs in these environments also increases the risk of someone becoming a perpetrator or victim of anti-social behaviour or violence.

Another local example of this work open to all faiths and none is Birmingham pastors [networkfour.org.uk](http://networkfour.org.uk)



BIRMINGHAM PASTORS



## ST GILES TRUST

# St Giles

Turning a past into a future

Project name:  
**A&E HOSPITAL TEAM**

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Location(s):  
**COVENTRY**

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Contact:  
**INFO@STGILESTRUST.ORG.UK**

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Website:  
**WWW.STGILESTRUST.ORG.UK**

We are a charity that provides support to vulnerable young people aged 25 years and under across the UK. Within the Midlands, there are various teams such as County Lines, Expect Respect (girls' gangs) and Missing Return Home Service. The A&E hospital team in Coventry is based within the emergency department.

Patients are admitted for violence-related incidents such as being stabbed, shot or physically assaulted. The team also sees young people who present with suicidal thoughts and attempts to assess whether they are being exploited. Here is an example of the work of one of the caseworkers.

#### Case study:

X is a 16-year-old boy who was referred, following a drug-induced psychosis due to past trauma. X is a young person who grew up without a father. He didn't have a great relationship with his mother and got involved with the wrong crowd. He had previously been arrested for violence and smoking cannabis, and last year three of his friends were sentenced for murder. His relationship with his mother was difficult. I started mediation sessions between mum and X to help them build their relationship. These sessions have helped them to have an amazing relationship and communicate effectively.

I supported X to go to a local college that had a football programme. X has kept out of trouble and is currently re-doing his GCSE English and Maths and working towards a level 3 extended diploma in Sport and Exercise. We have been able to support X in purchasing a new laptop so that he can continue to do his college work and have paid for additional football training sessions in an academy to better his performance overall. Our intervention was timely to X in preventing him from continuing a life of violence and poor relationship with his mother.

### Teachable moments

It has been found that, if appropriate interventions are offered at the right time, moments of the greatest helplessness in someone's life can be opportunities for the greatest empowerment. The charity Redthread, working in Birmingham hospitals, describes these as 'teachable moments', those that for most would appear to be the most desperate and the most disempowering, such as being confined to a hospital bed after having been a survivor of violence. This form of pastoral support meets an individual at their lowest and gives the vision and tools to pursue a better life.

### Supporting ex-offenders

One feature of pastoral support is believing that no one is 'too far-gone' to receive the opportunity of a fresh start, including the perpetrators of violent crime. The purpose of this pastoral support work with ex-offenders is to change hearts and minds, provide an alternative vision of what life could be outside the prison environment, and link ex-offenders into networks of support and accountability.

It is very important that ex-offenders are well supported and supervised as they may still present a safeguarding risk to others. However, if they have been on a facilitated journey of change, ex-offenders can use their lived experience to advise others against making bad choices.



## BRINGING HOPE CHARITY



Project name:

**DAMASCUS ROAD COMMUNITY AND PRISON SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

**YOUNG ADULT, 'INSIDE OUT', COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SERVICES**

Location(s):

**BIRMINGHAM, WALSALL, WOLVERHAMPTON AND WEST MIDLANDS PRISONS AND REGIONAL AREAS, DEPENDING ON REFERRAL SOURCES**

Contact:

**INFO@BRINGINGHOPE.CO.UK**

**TEL: 0121 454 9764**

Bringing Hope's programmes, activities and associated interventions are governed by a Christian ethos, upholding principles of justice, integrity and anti-oppressive practice, enabling us to understand spiritual, moral and ethical concerns as well as other needs.

Regardless of faith, our approaches are intended to offer help and support towards an individual or family's positive transformation, rehabilitation and change. Importantly, our approaches seek to address root causes of crime and violence. Therefore, we address needs, concerns, challenges and interests of service users within a holistic framework.

It has been challenging to develop trust with certain groups that have indicated that they have been let down and treated poorly by institutions that are supposed to be helpful and supportive. As a result, it has taken time to develop trusting relationships, towards offering culturally competent support that is sustainable.

We are strong advocates of using approaches and interventions that are community led/involved, rooted in a public health framework. Based on this, we work towards the following outcomes with young people:

- positive attitudinal and behavioural changes
- improved institutional behaviours (for those in prison and educational establishments)
- increased respect and empathy for others
- motivation to address offending behaviours
- willingness to set positive goals for the future
- restoration of family/community relationships

The Welcome Directory ([www.welcomedirectory.org.uk](http://www.welcomedirectory.org.uk)) maintain a national directory of faith communities across the faith spectrum that have committed to welcoming and supporting prison leavers. Research shows that faith communities offer unique qualities that support desistance, and so our resource is invaluable for overcoming barriers and facilitating these life-changing connections.



### Case Study

**Trigger warning: the following story refers to suicide**

X grew up in a turbulent home; his father left when he was three, and his mum later became involved with a new partner, a violent alcoholic who would regularly beat up X, his siblings and his mum. X hated being in the house, so resorted to staying out late and getting into trouble with the other kids. On his estate, getting into trouble with the police was seen as a status symbol, so X began to be involved in crime, keen to fit in and escape the difficulties at home. He'd grown dependent on alcohol from the age of 14/15, and described how alcohol lay at the heart of so many of his challenges, which then led to his arrest and ending up in prison.

X didn't have a faith then but grappled with the life he led. He began attending chapel while in prison, which started his journey of personal transformation. As he approached release, he was full of excitement for his new life. That first Sunday, he walked into the nearest church, expecting to be welcomed, connected through shared faith. Sadly, this wasn't the case. The only friends he had left were the people he used to commit crimes with. By then, they were involved in worse crimes, and, for a period, X found himself right back in that dark place.

At this time, he stumbled across a leaflet for a local 'Alpha' course at another church. He'd heard good things and knew he'd love to be involved. He was overcome by how welcoming they were. The journey had ups and downs, but X remembers the support and the grace he was shown, and the way individuals within the community continued to show up, to guide him and to walk alongside him in faith.

20 years on, he remains heavily involved in the church and regional community development. When asked how he thought his journey would have gone if he hadn't found a welcoming faith community, he

responded, 'I would definitely be dead. I would've been killed or I would've killed myself, without a doubt. The community really saved me.'

Provided by the Welcome Directory

### Supporting survivors of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG)



All survivors of domestic abuse, whether male or female, need and deserve our support and compassion. Statistically speaking, survivors of domestic abuse are more commonly female, and perpetrators are more commonly male. There is therefore a great need to support the many women who are either vulnerable to or have experienced abuse, and to challenge the attitudes and behaviours of men. All men have a responsibility to understand how their own behaviours impact on women or those of their male peers, and to challenge harmful behaviour wherever it is found.

Faith communities are not immune to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (including related issues such as female genital mutilation, so-called 'honour-based violence', forced marriage etc.). Sadly, it can be an unspoken issue. While theological debates around gender are diverse and complex, providers of pastoral care in faith settings should always seek to prioritise the welfare of individuals, especially those who are most vulnerable. Fortunately, some places of worship and faith-based organisations are leading the way in bringing these issues into the light, providing sanctuary for survivors, challenging harmful behaviours and raising the next generation to respect women and girls.

In July 2021, Sikh Women's Aid ([www.sikhwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.sikhwomensaid.org.uk)) launched the first ever survey (674 respondents) of experiences of domestic abuse/child sexual abuse in the Sikh/Panjabi community. The results were damning and indicated higher-than-national-average figures of women and some men experiencing both domestic abuse as adults and child sexual abuse as children.

## STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE



Project name:

**THE FAITH AND VAWG COALITION**

Location(s):

**NATIONAL**

Contact:

**HELLO@FAITHANDVAWG.ORG**

Website:

**WWW.FAITHANDVAWG.ORG**

The Faith and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Coalition is a partnership of organisations led by the Safety Across Faith and Ethnic (SAFE) Communities project at Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse. The Coalition seeks to build on existing work to address VAWG by providing a more strategic, regular, and structural approach to centring the experiences of survivors of faith in this work.

The Faith and VAWG Coalition brings together organisations and individuals, including:

- Restored
- Muslim Women's Network
- Jewish Women's Aid
- Sikh Women's Aid
- The Traveller's Movement
- Black Churches Domestic Abuse Forum.

Existing work to end domestic abuse at a grassroots level is rich and diverse. However, many survivors belonging to a faith community feel that, across society in general, including some specialist ending VAWG services, there is a lack of understanding of their experiences of abuse.

There is also a significant knowledge gap around the barriers that many survivors of faith face when seeking support, due to their religious identity, their faith community and experiences of spiritual abuse.

We wish to highlight the critical role that faith communities and religious groups play in addressing VAWG as they are often the first point of contact or help seeking for those experiencing abuse. Our organisations have vast expertise in developing meaningful change and building trust through the complex relationships between the specialist domestic abuse sector, survivors and religious and community groups.



## ADAVU



Project name:

**ADAVU**

Location(s):

**COVENTRY**

Contact:

**INFO@ADAVU.ORG.UK**

Website:

**WWW.ADAVU.ORG.UK**

Adavu, part of the Methodist Church in Britain, works to tackle the issue of modern slavery in the West Midlands through:

- long-term support to adult survivors of modern slavery making the transition into a life in the local community
- advocating justice in relation to the issue of modern slavery
- building partnerships to prevent and frustrate modern slavery
- raising awareness and understanding of modern slavery among voluntary, community and faith groups, and enabling effective responses to it.

**POWER THE FIGHT**

### Supporting survivors of exploitation and modern slavery

Sadly, modern slavery and other forms of exploitation can be found in the world today, in the UK, and maybe on a street near you. There are an estimated 40.3 million people trapped in modern slavery in the world today (Stop the Traffik, 2022). The charity, Adavu, names the devastating impacts of exploitation including the loss of support networks, financial independence and even basic dignity. Fortunately, faith communities are mobilising to help set free those who have been enslaved and are helping to empower them to live their own lives. Faith communities can be trained to spot the signs of exploitation and modern slavery in their local neighbourhoods.

### Cultural competency

London charity, 'Power the Fight' has developed a Therapeutic Intervention for Peace programme (TIP) which is now being piloted across London to provide culturally competent therapy to young people, families and frontline staff, impacted by violence that affects young people. The Therapeutic Intervention for Peace Report, released in 2020 in partnership with the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit, evidenced the experiences of young people, families and practitioners in order to improve the



effectiveness of therapeutic responses to youth violence. The report made several recommendations, including the need for greater cultural sensitivity and humility among those working with young people affected by violence. Cultural humility focuses on self-reflection and lifelong learning as a means to increased understanding of those from different cultural contexts. [www.powerthefight.org.uk/what-we-do/tip-programme](http://www.powerthefight.org.uk/what-we-do/tip-programme)

Other organisations provide a service tailored to the needs of particular faiths or cultures, such as the Muslim Youth Helpline ([myh.org.uk](http://myh.org.uk)), a listening service helpline, providing emotional support.



### Incident response

A critical incident involving serious violence can be deeply traumatic for the victim and can also hugely affect family, friends, the neighbourhood and even a whole city. Faith leaders are often essential in these moments in providing pastoral support to affected individuals and families.

London charity, Power the Fight, provides support in partnership with families by providing access to culturally competent, therapeutic, financial and legal support. It also makes one-off financial donations to families who have lost young people to violence in order to support with funeral and legal costs at a time of traumatic loss. [www.powerthefight.org.uk](http://www.powerthefight.org.uk)

### Clinical supervision

It is not only young people and those directly affected by violence who need therapeutic support but also those exposed to the trauma of others on a regular basis through their work. Frontline professionals can suffer what is known as 'vicarious trauma' or 'second-hand trauma', which involves feeling the trauma of others with whom they work. They may have their own past traumas, which are triggered by the cases they encounter at work. It is therefore important that professionals also have access to therapeutic support and pastoral care (known as 'clinical supervision') to make sure that they are emotionally healthy and able to continue their work in a sustainable way. Faith leaders may be in a position to offer such support.



## 7. GENEROUS HOSPITALITY

As well as the various ways in which faith communities work directly with young people and vulnerable adults, they also run activities that indirectly benefit young people by helping to build a more cohesive, resilient and compassionate community for them to grow up in. These activities are often characterised by generous hospitality to all in the wider community. Hospitality can take many forms from sharing food, to opening up buildings, to working with others of different backgrounds on issues of shared concern.

This section is not an exhaustive list of the various services that faith communities provide to society (services like debt advice or food banks are not mentioned), but is rather a snapshot of the various projects run by faith communities. These too are means of violence reduction.

### Welcome

Providing a place where anyone is welcome to attend is a powerful gesture, especially for those who are marginalised in society. Although today's society is better connected than ever before through the internet and social media, it is also a society where many are lonely and isolated. Providing a space that anyone can enter, and where they can enjoy refreshment and share their lives is a valuable asset in any community.

## PLACES OF WELCOME



Project name:

**PLACES OF WELCOME**

Location(s):

**WEST MIDLANDS AND NATIONAL**

Contact:

**CARRIE.BLOUNT@TCTOGETHER.ORG.UK**  
**TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER**

INFO@

**PLACESOFWELCOME.ORG.UK**

Website:

**WWW.PLACESOFWELCOME.ORG.UK**

Places of Welcome started in Birmingham. It aims to create a network of safe places, where people can connect, belong and contribute. There are now well over 400 venues across England and Wales. These can be in any location accessible to the public, including places of worship, community centres, housing associations, libraries and pharmacies, even community gardens.

Each one is open to anyone and each one shares the following values:

- Place – an accessible and hospitable building, open at the same time every week
- People – a place that is open to everyone, regardless of their circumstances or situation, and staffed by volunteers
- Presence – a place where people actively listen to one another
- Provision – a place that offers free refreshments (at least a cup of tea and a biscuit) and basic local information
- Participation – recognitions that every person coming to a place of Welcome will bring talents, experiences and skills that they might be willing to share locally.

Places of Welcome coordinators have the support of a Place of Welcome facilitator and access to networking opportunities, promotion, branding, shared resources, training sessions and events. Places of Welcome locations are promoted widely through various channels.

Places of Welcome are open to anyone of any age. Weekend venues tend to see a more cross-generational attendance. Places of Welcome often have children's activities, such as toys and games to keep young people engaged. Each Place of Welcome is encouraged to have appropriate safeguarding procedures in place.



## THE FEAST YOUTH PROJECT



Project name:  
**LIVING WELL WITH DIFFERENCE**

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Location(s):  
**BIRMINGHAM**

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Contact:  
**CONTACT@THEFEAST.ORG.UK**

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Website:  
**WWW.THEFEAST.ORG.UK**

We work with 11-18 year olds in Birmingham. We bring young people of different faiths, ethnicities and cultures together to build bridges in communities through activities, holiday programmes, social action and dialogue. We enable young people to become peacemakers and offer leadership and mentoring programmes for the older age group. Our work is all about bringing young people, who are different from one another, together to develop lasting friendships, to become more confident in their own faith and identity and to make a difference in their own communities.

Many of the young people we work with are suspicious of anyone different from them, or from a different area, and breaking down long-held prejudices is challenging. The pandemic made many feel even more isolated, so we have had to be more creative in the ways in which we engaged. Surprisingly, Zoom offered a safe space (with no travel issues). Returning to in-person activities was amazing, as young people met for the first time, but acted like old friends. Funding continues to be one of our biggest issues.

A parent wrote:

It has been difficult to find a sense of community since lockdown stopped the children from engaging in normal activities. I have been really impressed by how The Feast team has worked hard to foster a sense of family among the young people this year. Something that impressed me about The Feast is that young people from a variety of backgrounds, faiths and schools are made to feel special and included.

### Dialogue

Understanding and respecting people who are different from ourselves is an important part of a healthy, inclusive, democratic and multi-cultural society. It is important that learning about different faiths can be done in a safe space, where people can ask sincere questions and give honest answers. Learning about others breaks down stereotypes and fears based on ignorance and helps us to recognise the humanity of the person who may be different from us. Together, these help to reduce levels of mistrust and potential for division or even violence.



## SHRI VENKATESWARA (BALAJI) HINDU TEMPLE



Project name:  
**SANDWELL OASIS**

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Location(s):  
**SANDWELL**

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Contact:  
**DEEPAK.NAIK@NTLWORLD.COM**

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Website:  
**WWW.VENKATESWARA.ORG.UK**

The Sandwell Oasis project aims to transform an 11-acre former landfill site into a thriving community oasis (housed within the 23 acres of grounds of Shri Balaji Temple), bursting with life that invigorates people, plants and animals. The project will enhance mental and physical health, foster innovation and be a catalyst for a more prosperous and self-confident community, which has long suffered from multiple forms of deprivation and underinvestment.

The Sandwell Oasis has enabled the participation of young people in multiple ways, e.g. environmental renovation, cleaning and maintenance, designing and delivering projects such as planting trees and bushes.

### Environment

All humanity is dependent on the environment to sustain life and society. It is also known that access to nature has positive mental and physical health benefits. In inner-city areas, green spaces can be hard to come by or, if present, may be in disrepair or unsafe due to levels of anti-social behaviour or violence. Faith communities can be found working with local authorities and others to reclaim these urban green spaces, clean them up, make them safer and make them accessible for use by children and families. Well-maintained and healthy green urban spaces deter crime and increase wellbeing for all in the community.





## TOGETHER IN ACTION TRUST



Project name:  
**COVENTRY SACRED SPACE INITIATIVE**

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Location(s):  
**COVENTRY**

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Contact:  
**DEEPAK.NAIK@NTLWORLD.COM**

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Website:  
**WWW.TIATRUST.ORG**

The Coventry Sacred Space is an area in the heart of Coventry marked by a high concentration of places of worship, from many different faiths. The area of the Sacred Space has welcomed many migrant communities, over the decades, searching for refuge. The vision is for the Sacred Space to become a place for regular activities of music, art and dance, food and culture – pathways that lead to discovery and mental wellbeing for resident families and visitors.

Strong inter-faith relationships enable the Initiative to design and deliver work that enriches society with economic benefits, harmony and improvements to quality of life.

The project has gained from young people's perspectives and hopes, via workshops and questionnaires. Young people have also participated in activities such as litter picking. Ultimately, young people and adults will benefit most significantly from improved life chances. One project involved family activity packs containing a variety of items, e.g. skipping rope and drawing/colouring materials, being distributed to young people. The pack also contained items such as stress balls, therapy books and information leaflets to help adults cope with stressful situations and circumstances.

## Community

Different faith communities working together to solve issues of shared concern is a powerful demonstration of solidarity and commitment to the common good. It also challenges negative narratives that suggest that communities should remain separate or even pose a challenge to each other. By working together, different faith communities can pool their resources, experience and expertise to build up their local community for all, drawing closer to each other in the process.



## FAITHFUL FRIENDS ON TOUR



Project name:  
**FAITHFUL FRIENDS ON TOUR**

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Location(s):  
**SANDWELL (SMETHWICK)**

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Contact:  
**DAVID.GOULD@  
 HOLYTRINITYSMETHWICK.CO.UK**

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Website:  
**WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/  
 FAITHFULFRIENDSONTOUR**

Faithful Friends is a group of eight men in Smethwick from four different faiths, who began to meet monthly to eat and talk together, and have now become firm friends. They work together to address difference and respond constructively to the issues of concern in their own community.

*'We learned about our ignorance of each other's culture and faiths. We learned about our unspoken, often-unacknowledged prejudice. We discovered friendship was an amazing path to healing and hope. We have gone into schools and shared our work. The impact on staff and pupils has been enormous. The impact on the Faithful Friends has also been great, and we seek to understand the special commission we have.'*

Near Neighbours also encouraged 'Smethwick Inter-faith Friends', a quarterly meeting for local faith leaders, and 'Women First', a monthly group that has brought together women from diverse backgrounds.

## Friendship

It is one thing to meet your neighbour; it is another to befriend them and share your day-to-day life with them. Developing friendships across faith groups enables people to say that they genuinely belong to one community, because they know their neighbour, and their neighbour knows them and looks out for them.

## Risk management

Sadly, some faith communities become victims of hate crime and their places of worship targets for hate and vandalism. By working together, faith communities can look out for each other and improve the collective security of their places of worship. A Neighbourhood Watch scheme for places of worship is currently in the process of being established in Coventry. Other places of worship have developed their own security volunteers, who ensure the security of the place of worship and those who live and work nearby.





## 8. NURTURING FAMILIES

Many faith communities recognise the importance of the family unit for sustaining a stable society and giving children and young people the best start in life. Faith communities, as multi-generational groups of individuals with many hundreds of years of life experience between them, are well suited to provide a wrap-around network of support to new families and also those in later life. As such, faith communities themselves act as an 'extended family' to individuals, able to provide a ready supply of responsible adults in a child's life.

### Parenting and early years

Research tells us that the first 1001 days of life (known as 'early years') are critical to the physical, mental and social development of children. Supporting parents, guardians and carers to provide the best possible environment for the children in their care is critically important. Many places of worship put on parent and toddler groups, encourage couples to foster or adopt children, or provide social prescribing through which families are signposted to sources of support.

## APPROACHABLE PARENTING



Project name:

**APPROACHABLE PARENTING**

Location(s):

**BASED IN BIRMINGHAM AND WORKS  
ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS  
AND ONLINE NATIONALLY**

Contact:

**INFO@APPROACHABLEPARENTING.ORG.UK**

Website:

**WWW.APPROACHABLEPARENTING.ORG**

Approachable Parenting CIC is a registered company which is also a non-for-profit organisation that provides parenting courses and coaching to BME families, especially Muslim families, within the UK.

The organisation was developed because Muslim parents wanted help with parenting issues from an organisation that understood them, their culture and their faith. We at Approachable Parenting enable parents to explore problems and teach them skills that enable them to develop a better relationship with their family. Our work strengthens the family as a whole, by providing a safe environment where parents can explore problems. The Five Pillars of Parenting programmes was written by Muslim psychologists and parenting experts.

### Whole-life course

Other work conducted by faith communities nurtures wellbeing across the life course. This work supports older adults to be active participants in society and potentially sources of support to young people. This enables inter-generational encounters to take place, through which young and old can learn from and serve each other.



## HOPE COVENTRY



Project name:

**GOOD NEIGHBOURS COVENTRY**

Location(s):

**COVENTRY**

Contact:

**GOODNEIGHBOURS@HOPECOVENTRY.ORG.UK**

Website:

**WWW.HOPECOVENTRY.ORG.UK**

Good Neighbours Coventry finds friends for isolated elderly people in the community. The volunteer befrienders can be any adult age, and they visit or phone their older person once a week or fortnight. The project also helps older people to find local social groups that suit them and to establish inter-generational friendships.

The volunteers enjoy listening to stories and are able to share their own lives. They make special friendships, enhance their employability skills, improve their own wellbeing, and feel that they are giving back to the community. Young volunteers feel like they have a new grandparent to chat to.

Younger volunteers have gained confidence in themselves and enjoyed making new friends in their community. They value meeting people who are in different life stages and who can give them advice and new perspectives.

Volunteers have gone on to employment, using skills they have learned. They have improved their mental health by making a difference to others. Some young parents have brought their children with them on visits, which is positive for the children too.



# 9. TACKLING EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

## BIRMINGHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP



Project name:  
**SAFEGUARDING IN FAITH COMMUNITIES**

Location(s):  
**BIRMINGHAM**

Contact:  
**MOHAMMED.J.AKHTAR@BIRMINGHAMCHILDRENSTRUST.CO.UK**  
(FAITH PROJECT COORDINATOR)  
**BSCP.CONTACTUS@BIRMINGHAMCHILDRENSTRUST.CO.UK**  
**0121 464 2612**

Website:  
**WWW.LSCP.BIRMINGHAM.ORG.UK**

Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) is working in close collaboration with the Birmingham Council of Faiths to enhance the capacity, coordination and impact of faith-based organisations in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children across the City's diverse communities. The three elements to this project are:

### Creating a Designated Safeguarding Leads Network & Faith Map

To establish a network of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) supported by Community Safeguarding Champions (CSC)

To help train DSL for organisations who do not have one yet

Oversee creation of a faith map that enable individuals, professionals and the community to locate and contact faith organisations

### Safeguarding Training

Development of accredited training for DSL and CSC

Oversee an evaluation of the DSL Training to inform future development

### Assurance, Evaluation and Progress

Development of a bespoke Self-Assessment Safeguarding Tool Kit and resources to develop faith-based organisations

Publish up-to-date digital guidance which can be translated into key languages to complement the Tool Kit

We look forward to working with Faith organisations in Birmingham and feel free to contact us.

### Strengthening safeguarding and accountability

Strong safeguarding must underpin all work with children, young people and adults at risk. One simple definition of safeguarding is 'keeping children, young people and adults at risk safe from harm' (Barnardos, 2019). Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Safeguarding risks to children and young people can be present within the family home but can also be present in the wider community. Contextual Safeguarding refers to an 'approach to understanding, and responding to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.'

[www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](http://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk)



There are many forms of safeguarding risks. The College of Policing refers to various strands of public protection, including:

- + Adults at risk
- + Child abuse and neglect
- + Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- + Domestic abuse
- + Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- + Firearms licensing
- + Forced marriage and honour-based violence
- + Gangs and youth violence
- + Gun crime
- + Hate crime
- + Homicide
- + Kidnap and extortion
- + Knife crime
- + Managing offenders
- + Missing persons
- + Modern slavery
- + Sex work and prostitution
- + Rape and sexual offences
- + Stalking or harassment
- + Vulnerability to Radicalisation (V2R)
- + Operation Hydrant

Based on [www.college.police.uk/app/major-investigation-and-public-protection](http://www.college.police.uk/app/major-investigation-and-public-protection). We recommend you visit this website to learn what each of these terms mean.



## Responding to safeguarding concerns

The 4 R's of safeguarding children is professional practice for how you can recognise, record, report and refer in the situation of child abuse.

### RECOGNISING

You must first be able to recognise the signs and indicators of abuse. Abuse maybe physical, emotional, sexual or neglect. Remember, exploitation and violence are forms of abuse.

### RECORDING

This is the crucial part as it's the bit where you actually say, 'I've recognised the concern.' Record as thoroughly as possible and as much as you can, which includes what the concern is and what has happened. Ask yourself things like 'What happened? When did it happen? Who was involved? Where did it happen?'

### REPORTING

Always pass the information to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and/or your local authority's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

### REFERING

Is there an immediate risk of harm to this child or children? If so, ring the police on 999, ring the local authority, and do not delay. If this is not urgent, make the referral when you need to, make it in a timely manner and the local authority will take over their steps as appropriate or the police will act as they see fit.

If you decide not to take action, where are you keeping your records? And are you reviewing those decisions?

Based on <https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources/4-rs-of-safeguarding>

Any agency or practitioner who has concerns that a child or adult in your institute may be at risk of harm as a consequence of exploitation should report this to your organisation's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or directly to your local authority's safeguarding team. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or Safeguarding Adults in the local authority brings together agencies and their information in order to identify risks to children at the earliest possible point and respond with the most effective interventions. If you need to report concerns out of office hours then you can contact the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) for your local authority. Details of your local MASH and EDT team can be found on your local authority website and referrals should be made in accordance with your respective local authority safeguarding policy.

All local authorities retain their legal duties to protect children and adults at risk of harm from abuse, neglect and harm. An Early Help Assessment may be crucial in the early identification of children and young people who need additional support due to risk of involvement in youth violence.

**REMEMBER**  
If there is a threat to life or significant risk of harm to the child or adult, the police must be contacted immediately on 999.

## Safeguarding resources

You can find much more safeguarding guidance, example policies and best practice by accessing further resources, including:

### Department for Education

Working Together to Safeguard Children  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children)

Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings: code of practice  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice)

### NSPCC

Safeguarding children and child protection  
[www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection](http://www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection)

Safeguarding in faith communities  
[www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/for-faith-communities](http://www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/for-faith-communities)

### National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

Steps to a Safer Organisation  
[www.knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/steps-to-a-safer-organisation](http://www.knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/steps-to-a-safer-organisation)

### Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Safeguarding people in faith communities  
[www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/faith-groups/communities](http://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/faith-groups/communities)

### Near Neighbours

Faithfully safeguarding children and young people  
[www.near-neighbours.org.uk/s/NN\\_Toolkit\\_Safeguarding\\_Children\\_V4.pdf](http://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/s/NN_Toolkit_Safeguarding_Children_V4.pdf)

### Thirtyone:eight

Includes information on DBS checks, training and guidance  
[www.thirtyoneeight.org/](http://www.thirtyoneeight.org/)



### Further resources about hate crime and how to report it

- + True Vision – [www.report-it.org.uk](http://www.report-it.org.uk)
- + Kick it Out – [www.kickitout.org](http://www.kickitout.org)
- + Citizen's Advice – [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/hate-crime](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/hate-crime)
- + Stop Hate UK – [www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org)
- + Anti-bullying Alliance – [anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/bullying-and-law/hate-crime-and-bullying](http://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/bullying-and-law/hate-crime-and-bullying)



## GURDWARA GURU NANAK PARKASH



Project name:

**SAFEGUARDING OUR COMMUNITIES**

Location(s):

**COVENTRY**

Contact:

**INFO@GGNPCOVENTRY.ORG**

Website:

**WWW.GCNPCOVENTRY.ORG**

Gurdwara Guru Nanak Parkash (Sikh Temple) worked in partnership with the Prevent team (Coventry City Council) to provide safeguarding training for most of the Sikh Gurdwaras in Coventry. The main aim was to upskill and update the community in safeguarding. Alongside this training offer, we also updated our policies and procedures.

In addition to the initial safeguarding training, the Gurdwara then proceeded to offer the following training:

- Mental Health First Aid for Adults, delivered by Sikh Forgiveness
- Suicide Awareness, delivered by Chrysalis
- A session on mental health and wellbeing and a monthly clinic on site
- Alcohol and the Impact on Communities, delivered by the Sikh Recovery Network.

This training programme is evolving, and more workshops of interests and courses will be offered over time.

One of the challenges was funding. However, the City Council offered its services free as it saw the importance of building up safeguarding in the community. When courses had a cost, this was heavily subsidised by the Gurdwara, as it says that this is investing in the community.

By upskilling the community and having named safeguarding leads, the topics and strategies naturally would be cascaded to families who had children and young people.

### Preventing radicalisation

Prevent is part of the **National Counter Terrorism Strategy**, it focuses on the early intervention and prevention of all forms of extremism. There are three core objectives for Prevent:

- + to tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism
- + to safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support
- + to enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

### Your role

Faith communities play a vital role in the lives of many children, young people and adults, and they can offer safe and supportive environments in which to understand and discuss sensitive topics. Such places of worship and faith-based communities have a responsibility to protect children and young people from harm, which includes the harm of becoming radicalised and/or being exposed to extreme views.

### Radicalisation

Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support or be involved in violent or non-violent extremist ideologies and can result in a person becoming drawn into terrorism by:

- + being groomed online or in person
- + psychological manipulation of political or personal grievances
- + exposure to violent material and other inappropriate propaganda
- + the risk of physical harm or death through extremist acts.

It can be a gradual process, so that young people and children in particular may not realise their vulnerabilities are being

exploited or understand what they are being drawn into.

### Vulnerability factors

Anyone can be radicalised, but there are some factors that could make a person more vulnerable. These factors may include:

- + having low self-esteem or feeling isolated
- + being easily influenced or impressionable
- + feeling rejection or a sense of injustice
- + experiencing community tension among different groups
- + being bullied or feeling discriminated against
- + experiencing difficulties with mental health
- + being disrespectful of or holding feelings of anger towards family and peers
- + having a strong need for acceptance or belonging
- + experiencing grief such as the loss of a loved one.

### What you can do

- + Include safeguarding from radicalisation in your safeguarding policies and procedures.

- + Identify those at risk and make sure that everyone in your establishment knows when and how to report a concern.
- + Work in partnership with other organisations across the community.
- + Promote positive messages of tolerance and community cohesion.
- + Help parents and children access support when they need it.
- + Notice, Check, Share. If you notice something of concern, you can check and share this knowledge with your local Prevent contacts.
- + Find out more about training opportunities and other support that is available to you from your local Prevent Team (for example, Coventry [www.coventry.gov.uk/prevent](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/prevent)). You can also visit the national website: **ACT Early to Prevent Radicalisation**.

### Tackling hate crime

#### What is hate crime?

Hate crime is any criminal offence that is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a person based on their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity. Hate crime can be any criminal or non-criminal act such as graffiti, vandalism to a property, name calling, assault or online abuse using social media.

### Further resources about hate crime and how to report it

- + True Vision – [www.report-it.org.uk](http://www.report-it.org.uk)
- + Kick it Out – [www.kickitout.org](http://www.kickitout.org)
- + Citizen's Advice – [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/hate-crime](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/hate-crime)
- + Stop Hate UK – [www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org)
- + Anti-bullying Alliance – [anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/bullying-and-law/hate-crime-and-bullying](http://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/bullying-and-law/hate-crime-and-bullying)

Project name:

**WEST MIDLANDS HATE CRIME VICTIM SERVICE**

Location(s):

**WEST MIDLANDS AND NATIONAL**

Contact:

**EMAIL: HATECRIMEVICTIMSERVICE@REMEDIUK.ORG**

**FREEPHONE (MON-FRI, 9AM-5PM): 0800 488 0894**

**REMEDI ALSO PROVIDE A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SERVICE**

Website:

**WWW.REMEDIUK.ORG/RESTORATIVE-JUSTICE WWW.REMEDIUK.ORG**

We provide a support service for all victims and witnesses of hate crime and hate incidents. Our friendly team of triage workers and support workers will work with you to assess your needs following the hate crime and build a tailored support plan with you to address these needs, enabling you to cope and recover from the hate crime.

#### We can offer you:

- confidential emotional and practical support
- support at court
- advocacy
- access to a range of support agencies
- support with your victim personal statement.

We can support you whether the offence has been reported to the police or not. Our support spans the whole of the West Midlands, and our diverse team of volunteers and staff has a great deal of local knowledge to best support you through your journey. We work in partnership with local and national charities across the region to ensure that you are receiving the best support in your recovery.



## SECTION 5:

## Staying equipped



## CONCLUSION

This Toolkit has made the case that faith communities have a critical role, not only in helping to prevent serious youth violence, but also in helping to build more resilient, compassionate and safer societies.

Although the challenges affecting young people today are many and complex, faith communities can, if empowered and equipped to do so, make a significant positive difference to the wellbeing of young people. This can be achieved by mobilising faith communities' considerable good will and resources, robust and effective training, and ensuring that they are working closely alongside police, local authorities and other partners. Key to unlocking this potential is building greater trust, and so strong relationships and genuine community participation must remain at the heart of this work if we wish to see real change in the years to come.

The landscape of violence and the work of preventing it are always evolving and so we recognise the need for adaptable resources that can be regularly updated, as well as foundational resources like this Toolkit. This is why we have created the Faith Alliance Connect Directory, an online directory of Faith Alliance members. The Directory is an inspiring repository of faith-based services across the region and can be searched by location, faith affiliation and service type (e.g. youth spaces or pastoral care). We hope it will enable members to connect with each other and share best practice, as well as showcase to the public and policy makers the huge positive contribution of faith communities to society.

You can access the Connect Directory and other resources by visiting our website ([westmidlands-vrp.org/faith-alliance/](http://westmidlands-vrp.org/faith-alliance/)) or by scanning the QR code left.

Thanks for taking the time to read this Toolkit. We hope it will inspire you to take action to help make your community safer. Together, we can make a change.

[#BelieveinHope](#)

## Further resources

Below is a list of additional resources which may help to further equip you:

## On the role of faith communities in meeting social needs

## Near Neighbours website

This website is full of good practice and guidance for faith communities wishing to set up new projects to meet social needs in their area. Includes guidance on writing funding applications, social prescribing, safeguarding, volunteering and working with other faiths.

[www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources](http://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources)

## Keeping the Faith: Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic

This report evaluates the partnership work that took place between faith communities and local authorities during the pandemic and provides recommendations for future work.

[www.faihandandsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/APPG\\_CovidReport\\_Full\\_V4.pdf](http://www.faihandandsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/APPG_CovidReport_Full_V4.pdf)

## Stepping Up and Stepping Out: A New Deal Opportunity for Faith Communities.

This report makes recommendations for how faith communities can work more closely with government to meet social needs

[www.goodfaith.org.uk/case-studies/stepping-up-and-stepping-out-towards-a-future-social-covenant-between-faith-communities-and-government-in-covid-19-recovery-and-beyond](http://www.goodfaith.org.uk/case-studies/stepping-up-and-stepping-out-towards-a-future-social-covenant-between-faith-communities-and-government-in-covid-19-recovery-and-beyond)

## On tackling youth violence

## Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) – Toolkit

This resource brings together all the latest available evidence to evaluate how effective different types of projects and interventions are in tackling youth violence.

[www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit](http://www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit)

## Home Office – A Practitioner Toolkit Working with young people to prevent involvement in Serious and Organised Crime.

This resource provides guidance for professionals to help the young people they work with avoid involvement in serious and organised crime.

[www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/958840/6.7152\\_HO\\_Updates-SOC-Prevent-intervention-toolkit\\_v5\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958840/6.7152_HO_Updates-SOC-Prevent-intervention-toolkit_v5_2_.pdf)

## Home Office – Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit

This resource provides professionals with knowledge and tools to 'disrupt the sexual and criminal exploitation of children and young people, break the cycle of abuse and send a signal to perpetrators about the consequences of their actions'.

[www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/794554/6.5120\\_Child\\_exploitation\\_disruption\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794554/6.5120_Child_exploitation_disruption_toolkit.pdf)

## National Working Group (NWG) website

This website provides resources that inform, educate and prevent child exploitation and abuse.

[www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org)

## Stop The Traffik website

This website provides information about human trafficking and guidance about how it can be addressed.

[www.stophetraffik.org](http://www.stophetraffik.org)



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**West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership**

Lloyd House  
Colmore Circus Queensway  
Birmingham B4 6NQ

Sat nav users please use B4 6AT

**Email:** [vrp@westmidlands.police.uk](mailto:vrp@westmidlands.police.uk)

**Telephone:** 0121 626 6060

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