**Minutes of meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Safeguarding on Faith Communities**

**1 July 2025, 14.00-15.30, Committee Room G, House of Lords**

**Present (Parliamentarians and Secretariat):**

Ruth Jones MP, Labour (Co-Chair)

The Lord Bishop of Bristol, Viv Faull (Co-Chair)

Sam Carling MP, Labour (Officer)

Minister Minister Phillips Phillips, Labour

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, House of Lords, Crossbench

Justin Humphreys (Principal Advisor to the APPG)

Katy Jackson, Public Policy & Advocacy Manager

Peter Wright, Head of Marketing & Communications

Jackie Mills, Executive Project Manager

[Details of further attendees withheld from public record]

Ruth and +Viv welcomed people and sadly this was +Viv’s last APPG meeting as she is retiring on 1st September. She thanked Ruth for co-chairing with her in this important role and acknowledgement and appreciation was given of the many years of service to the cause of safeguarding +Viv had given, including time with the APPG since 2021.

**Address from Minister for Safeguarding, Jess Phillips MP**

The Minister for Safeguarding joined the meeting and acknowledged the importance of the existence of the APPG.

Jess has been calling for Mandatory Reporting for many years. However, making sure it is applicable to all means that moving forward on this is complicated. Legislation on it’s own is not enough and resourcing, training processes are far more important, along with cultural change.

There will be a pause after Mandatory Reporting comes through, with work to follow to consider what training is needed and what sits within the guidance. Mandatory Reporting applies to everyone and there will be consequences for not complying with it.

Jess then answered a few questions around Mandatory Reporting relating to faith communities.

**Questions for the Minister**

1. *How do you think the mandatory reporting duty will improve outcomes for those experiencing child sexual abuse in faith communities and do you foresee any particular challenges for these communities?*

A culture shift should be expected, which may come from protectionism, but the route is not important. The duty applying to faith communities applies anywhere and safeguarding issues need to be looked at within their own institution. There are many great organisations who will already have good safeguarding practice in place and more than are willing to comply. The thing that I can foresee as being a barrier is that an umbrella body for faith-based organisations does not exist. This exists in other contexts e.g., the medical profession. The Charity Commission does cover many organisations, but not all faith-based organisations are charities and therefore fall outside their remit. The Commission, who mainly focus on charity finances, may need to be given greater teeth, resources, ability to do the work and legislation to back it up. The very virtue of a faith is about belief and, respectfully, there is a more fundamental potential for people to put blame on a higher power. There is an ‘ethereal’ aspect to this, which is a challenge, and this has been used to abuse people many times.

1. *How can the Government support faith communities in understanding their role in keeping children safe with the Position of Trust legislation, that is not universally known about in many of the faith communities, especially the smaller faith groups?*

In the rollout of Mandatory Reporting there will be a pause to establish a rollout plan. There will be a specific part of the training around faith-based communities. Most interaction so far has shown that groups welcome this. The hope is that the fundamental purpose doesn’t become derailed by powerful voices – the fundamental need for Mandatory Reporting has to be maintained. A communication strategy is needed.

1. *Many survivors of abuse within faith settings (such as so-called ‘honour-based’ abuse, sexual abuse and spiritual abuse) speak about being disbelieved, silenced, or infantilised by statutory services. What can be done to ensure the safety of faith communities? And in your view, what is a good response from these institutions to help survivors and victims of abuse in a faith context heal?*

Anyone in a leadership role holds that role within a community. The Government will encourage leaders to speak to their communities about the expectations and need to put all the standardised procedures in place. Preaching should align with this. It is not just about policy but about being mindful in the practice. I would put a challenge to faith leaders on this as many people preach on poverty, but what about preaching against, for example, forced marriage in the context of church. If an umbrella body existed, then people should be able to report to them with the result that the institution could be stopped if they don’t follow the law. I can’t mandate every institution to have a specific point of contact for safeguarding. It is important that leaders within the community understand their roles here.

1. *A subsequent question was asked whether the umbrella body could be a faith-based Commission.*

With an established Church of England already in existence, this makes it complicated. The Charity Commission can bar people if there are safeguarding concerns; however, with appointments made by the King, this leads to a difficult position as to who bars who. I can’t see how that would work.

1. *How does the Government plan to continue engaging with and developing their understanding of safeguarding in faith communities – will it consider specialist resources within the Child Protection Authorities to improve understanding and coordination across Government?*

I am very keen to keep engaging with this APPG and take advice. The Government tends to engage with the same small group, so it is helpful to get broader input. The MHCLG works on community cohesion, and I am open to suggestions as to how best to do this.

Justin asked if the Minister would work with the APPG around the role of CPAs and Minister Phillips said she would be willing to do this and work with others.

Ruth thanked the Minister for attending.

**Update on the work of the APPG – Justin Humphreys**

Briefing papers on key issues (IICSA recommendations, mandatory reporting and loopholes of regulated activity definitions) have been circulated and questions used in various settings with positive feedback and impact.

**Update on the Crime and Policing Bill – Sam Carling MP**

Sam expressed concern that Mandatory Reporting doesn’t fully meet the recommendations from IICSA. Jess has made a commitment to make it work and understands the concerns but there are some deliverability issues.

The Bill now sits with the House of Lords, after which it will return to the Commons. Sam spoke on [17th June](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-06-17/debates/CEAC32EB-971E-4A0D-BD3A-80A92B6DC230/CrimeAndPolicingBill#contribution-06CF1E83-D400-4AD3-A282-F57EAEF59B71) in the House highlighting three issues:

1. What happens to those who don’t comply with the duty?
2. Who is included under the duty?
3. What triggers the duty?

Sam will be taking this forward with some peers including Tanni.

**Update from the House of Lords – Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson**

Tanni has made some attempts to include amendments on Mandatory Reporting with Private Members’ Bills – Regulated and Other Activities (Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse) Bill and the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which has elicited useful debate.

Pressure needs to be kept up and Tanni will pick up the amendments to the Crime and Policing Bill with the intention to take this to the vote at the Report stage; also, with raising the public profile with a joint Op Ed piece from Tanni and Sam.

Those in attendance were then invited to ask questions, which covered a range of issues such as: extending Mandatory Reporting to vulnerable adults, broadening the representation of the APPG among other faith/belief communities, incorporating the voices of those with lived experience, training for statutory services on faith communities and vice versa, the investigation methods for non-compliance with the duty to report, raising other areas of child abuse, further conversations around Section 75 of the Crime and Policing Bill around exceptions, and how to map all faith settings (The DfE has just released a [call for evidence](https://consult.education.gov.uk/out-of-school-settings-safeguarding-team/out-of-school-settings-safeguarding-call-for-evide/) on Out-of-School-Settings safeguarding and all urged to respond to this).

**Conclusion**

Actions to take forward were noted around contact with the Charity Commission and auditing the current representation of the APPG; also reviewing how Mandatory Reporting has been rolled out in other countries.