



Executive summary

There are more than 50,000 places of worship in the UK. Many provide a range of community-based support initiatives. This provides a significant opportunity, alongside their responsibility to effectively contribute to safeguard children, to collaborate and work together.

This briefing paper draws together key points from the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Safeguarding in Faith Communities to contribute to debates and discussions around the implementation of recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), and the Bloom Review and Bailey Review. Opportunities include the Crime and Policing Bill, the Children and Wellbeing Bill, and the IICSA timetable.

The APPG has highlighted the importance of robust mandatory reporting duties in the Crime and Policing Bill, as current provisions will have minimal impact, and the need to review the definition of Regulated Activity to strengthen mandatory reporting, positions of trust, 'Duty to Refer' and eligibility decisions. It also emphasises that co-production and partnership working with Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, and public awareness for faith communities needs to be central to the Government's considerations when implementing the recommendations.

Key considerations for the implementation of IICSA recommendations:

► Mandatory reporting

Criminal sanction for failing to report child sexual abuse.

Failing to report in the Crime and Policing Bill should be defined as a crime and have criminal sanctions attached. The current proposal of the Bill will have little impact on the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse.

The duty to report child sexual abuse needs to cover suspected abuse and include evidence of signs and indicators of abuse.

The current Bill does not include provisions for babies, disabled children or children who do not have English as a first language (who will not be able to disclose verbally). The Office for National Statistics figures (2019) highlight that only 8.3% of assaults and 9.8% of penetrations were reported directly to a person in authority¹. This

puts the onus on the child to protect themselves by directly disclosing their sexual abuse.

Protection for those who report in good faith.

The Crime and Policing Bill should include measures to protect those who report in good faith from retaliation and additional consequences (e.g. losing their jobs).

► Regulated Activity

Review of the definition of Regulated Activity is required. Effective mandatory reporting, positions of trust, duty to refer and eligibility decisions all hinge on this definition.

The frequency element of the definition of Regulated Activity is currently a loophole for those working and volunteering with children and young people monthly in faith communities as they are either not classed as being in regulated activity or do not understand it. The definition should be based on the nature of the contact rather than other factors that cannot easily or consistently be applied across settings.

► Co-production and partnership

Do not forget faith communities.

Many faith communities will be the sole organisations interacting regularly with children and young people within the context of their families. The legislation needs to have provisions for and understanding of these groups. There is an opportunity to safeguard children and young people well in these communities, but it starts by working together and including them in the conversation as partners.

Inter-departmental coordination to tackle the issues and to improve outcomes.

There is a need to consider Recommendation 2 from IICSA to establish Child Protection Authorities in England and Wales. The Ministerial Group on Child Protection is a good place to start, but further work is required to effect change at policy and grass roots levels.

Victims and Survivors need to be at the heart of the implementation.

This should include representation from a cross-section of faith and belief. Awareness of the impact that the current secular system can have on Victims and Survivors from non-Christian faiths is key. A faith informed system of thinking is required when engaging with Victims and Survivors across faith groups.

Co-production with all faith communities.

There needs to be consideration for engaging with faith groups that are 'harder to reach' and, in some cases, resistant to law and best practice. Engagement with faith communities across the board is key to understanding how the proposed legislation will apply to them, to increase their awareness of child sexual abuse and relevant responsibilities.

► Public awareness

Many faith communities will not know about IICSA or the recommendations.

It is important that when considering Recommendation 4 from IICSA, specific thought is given to how to reach faith communities (especially those that are 'hard to reach') with any public awareness campaign.

► Public Health Costs

There is no cost more important than protecting a child's innocence.

There is an economic, social and moral cost of child sexual abuseⁱⁱ. The importance of investing in prevention of child sexual abuse should not be ignored regardless of the upfront cost. Although the implementation of the IICSA recommendations will cost, in the long run, this will minimise children being abused and reduce future costs to the Government.

Conclusions

The mandatory reporting provision in the Crime and Policing Bill should include the following: a duty to report which covers suspected abuse, a criminal sanction for failing to report child sexual abuse and protection for those reporting child sexual abuse in good faith.

A review of the definition of regulated activity is needed for effective mandatory reporting and clarity on eligibility decisions, duty to refer and positions of trust.

Faith communities need to be involved in the implementation of the IICSA recommendations to ensure that understanding and loopholes are considered at all levels of rollout. The public awareness campaign must consider reaching faith communities to ensure that they are equipped to understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. Victims and Survivors need to be at the heart of this work.

Any queries or for further information about the APPG email appg@thirtyoneeight.org or go to [@APPG_SafeFaith](https://thirtyoneeight.org/appg)

References:

ⁱ[Child sexual abuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

ⁱⁱ[The economic and social cost of contact child sexual abuse - GOV.UK](#)

This briefing paper has been produced by Thirtyone:eight, Secretariat to the APPG. The views expressed are those of the group, or individual members of the group only.