

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

Tuesday 2nd November 2021 at 1pm on Zoom

Present:

Officers

Janet Daby MP (Co-Chair)
Lord Bishop Viv Faull (Co-Chair)
Baroness Hollins (Vice-Chair)
Stephen Timms MP (Vice-Chair)
Tan Dhesi MP

Secretariat

Justin Humphreys, Thirtyone:eight
Jackie Mills, Thirtyone:eight
Bridget Robb, Thirtyone:eight
Peter Wright, Thirtyone:eight

Attendees

Zahra Awaiz-Bilal, Senior Associate in the Child Abuse Team at Bolt Burdon Kemp
Rev Dr Beatrice Brandon, Adviser and Consultant for the Healing Ministry and the Ministry of Deliverance
Tim Carter, Methodist Church
Alan Collins, Hugh James Solicitors
Simon Cross, Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership
Professor Gordon Lynch, University of Kent
Chrissie Edgar, Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency
Lloyd Evans, JWatch
Martin Goodwin, Head of Safeguarding Diocese of London
Professor David Hampshire, IFN
Shirley Maginley, NSPCC
Lewis North, Charity Commission
Jenny Symmons, Senior Researcher for Janet Daby MP
Michael Walker, Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

Janet Daby welcomed everyone and introductions were given by her as Co-Chair, Bishop Viv as Co-Chair and Justin Humphreys, CEO of the thirtyone:eight who provide the Secretariat to the APPG.

Justin spoke about the proposed subject area of exploring the engagement between faith communities and statutory partners in relation to safeguarding work (see slide presentation). Faith communities have a presence in almost every town and city in the UK and contribute to providing a wide range of services. However, there is a disconnection between institutions and previous research and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) have shown that this has been an issue for a long time. There is also a huge variation in safeguarding practice across faiths, and a levelling of standards is needed.

This issue has also been raised as part of the Faith Engagement Review (DLUHC) which raised two pertinent questions.

1. The extent to which Government and its agencies have sufficient faith literacy and considers the partnership between faith groups and the State.
2. Where harm might be caused through religious or faith-based practices and a review of the Government's role in tackling them.

Contributions were heard from many attendees and the consensus was that this area would be worthwhile exploring, although consideration needs to be taken about the scope and focus. It will be important to ensure a broad range of faith communities are included in this and attendees were encouraged to promote the APPG as widely as possible.

Other points to take into consideration were:

- Victims and survivors need to be central
- Helping to bring about change which is facilitative rather than punitive
- Reflecting on the fact that faith communities are inclusive to all
- How to map small, independent faith communities

Professor Gordon Lynch spoke about research being planned around this subject and will be invited back to address the APPG when more research has been carried out. Colin Bloom, Faith Engagement Advisor, will be invited to share emerging findings from the Faith Engagement Review.

In terms of mapping faith communities, a suggested starting point will be identifying these through Section 11 Audit safeguarding self-assessments as outlined by Simon Cross.

A further subject area of conversion therapy was suggested by Rev Dr Beatrice Brandon. Bishop Viv agreed that this could be considered.

Next Steps:

1. Justin will follow up with Simon Cross and Gordon Lynch in terms of further study and report back to the APPG
2. A date for the next meeting to be identified and communicated.

Bishop Viv expressed her gratitude for everyone who attended and contributed.