



Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**

## **BELIEVING WE CAN**

Promoting the contribution faith-based organisations can make to reducing adult and youth re-offending

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**Response to consultation carried out by the Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service and Youth Justice Board.**

**This information is also available on the Ministry of Justice website: [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)**

## Contents

Introduction and contact details	3
Background	4
Summary of responses	5
Government response and next steps	7
Annex A – Responses to specific questions	9
Annex B – List of respondents	14
The consultation criteria	16



## Introduction and contact details

1. This report follows the consultation 'Believing We Can: Promoting the contribution that faith-based organisations can make to reducing adult and youth re-offending'.

It covers

- the background to the consultation paper,
- a summary of the responses to the paper,
- the next steps following the consultation.

Further copies of this report and the consultation paper can be obtained by contacting **Mary Hassan** at the address below:

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This report is also available on the Ministry's website: [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

Alternative format versions of this publication are available on request.

## Background

The 'Believing We Can' consultation paper, published on 27th November 2007, sought to promote the work of faith-based organisations with both adult and young offenders in custody and the community, and explore further actions to strengthen engagement with the faith based sector to support work to reduce re-offending. It was circulated at national level, in regions and Wales and locally through NOMS, the Youth Justice Board and partner organisations.

The consultation requested responses to a series of questions on the role of faith-based organisations in reducing re-offending and asked respondents to identify challenges and comment on the way forward.

This consultation took place at the same time as consultations on the **Reducing Re-Offending Strategic Plan**, the **NOMS Third Sector Action Plan** and the Ministry of Justice/Department of Health's consultation, **Improving Health, Supporting Justice**. Separate reports summarizing responses to these consultations will also be published. Faith specific consultation events were held at YOI Glen Parva and YOI Thorne Cross and feedback was also taken at consultation events on reducing re-offending and on the role of the Third Sector in regions and Wales.

This report summarises the responses received, the government response to key issues raised and describes how the consultation will influence future strategy and delivery by NOMS working with partners. A list of respondents to the consultation is at **Annex B**

## Summary of the responses

1. The consultation paper outlines the important part played by faith based organisations through the additional skills, knowledge and expertise they bring to dealing with the multiple disadvantages faced by offenders. It describes the types of faith-based activity undertaken in custody and the community along with the challenges and barriers that were identified by faith-based and other organisations at the HMPS 'Believing We Can' conference in November 2006. The consultation was advised on by the Faith Alliance National Strategy Group. Annex C provides a list of members for the group. In addition it details the action being taken to develop further links with the Third Sector.

2. Fifteen questions were asked in relation to three key areas. These were:

- The role of faith based organisations in reducing re-offending
- Challenges
- The way forward

A summary of the consultation responses and the Government response to the key issues raised is below. A range of faith based and third sector groups, probation, prisons and youth offender institutions responded as did individuals. Contributions were predominately from Christian organisations although responses were received from multi-faith groups including the Network of Buddhist Organisations and the Muslim Chaplaincy Network. A number of responses were received from Humanist organisations and their supporters that centred on their concerns that faith organisations were receiving privileged treatment and secular organisations were excluded. More detailed responses to specific questions can be found at **Annex A**.

A total of all sixty eight responses were received from:

- 2 from Prisons/Young Offender Institutions
- 2 from Prisoners
- 4 from Probation
- 4 from Community Chaplaincies
- 4 from Prison Chaplaincies
- 7 from Christian faith groups
- 2 from other faith groups
- 4 from multi-faith groups
- 2 from faith conferences
- 9 from third and private sector organisations
- 2 from humanist associations
- 1 from others
- 25 from private individuals

A full list of respondents can be found in **Annex B**.

4. In addition over one hundred participants attended faith specific conferences at Glen Parva and Thorne Cross Youth Offender Institutions. The participants came from a number of different faith groups.

5. Some key messages on working with faith-based organisations were consistent across the third sector and faith consultations:

- General support for the principles and aims, with a request to match these to specific and measurable actions.
- Support for effective collaboration between the Ministry of Justice/NOMS and third sector organisations to understand offender needs and what works; and to design and deliver services in partnership
- The need to provide guidance to policy makers and commissioners on the services provided by faith-based organisations in custody and the community; and to challenge some of the barriers principally funding (proselytising

- concern), lack of understanding by other sectors and wider third sector, and mainly small community groups that are poorly networked and need skills and support that faith-based organisations face in working to reduce re-offending.
- Concerns about the lack of funding available for faith-based organisations in particular in regard to Community Chaplaincy projects.
  - Need for clearer information and communication on criminal justice strategy and NOMS and partners' priorities and new structures of decision making, governance funding and commissioning.
6. The pattern of consultation responses can not be taken as representative of the views of all the interested parties. The summary of responses only therefore reflects the views of those who responded. It was surprising to see so little comment for example about the opportunity for faith groups to better support offenders subject to community orders or the current work undertaken for diverse faith groups as part of unpaid work/ community payback
7. The responses were analysed for common themes on a question by question basis. In particular they were analysed for new approaches to working in partnership; learning to date; a consensus on the key challenges and possible solutions to future work in custody and the community to reduce re-offending.
9. The consultation responses have informed the third sector paper, 'Working with the Third Sector to Reduce Re-offending 2008-2011.' Ministry of Justice, NOMS and YJB would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to this consultation.

## Government Response and Next Steps

1. The responses highlighted the important contribution that faith-based organisations already play in reducing re-offending. It also confirmed that faith-based groups have a long and established way of working with offenders both in prison and in the community. The responses and the events provided many positive examples of work underway. There were strong examples of the multi-faith prison chaplaincies across the country engaging with a number of offenders from a number of different faith backgrounds. Also responses highlighted the important 'through the gate' worked carried out by Community Chaplaincy projects to meet offenders needs both in prison and the community.
  2. Many responses also supported assumptions around the important role of volunteers within faith-based organisations. Volunteers carry out a wide range of activity to support offenders, both in prison and the community, and their families; to help them find jobs and homes, to increase the social contact of prisoners, support their children and families and provide a link with local communities and continuity for ex-offenders.
  3. The responses demonstrated the need for more clarity on how the new NOMS structures were going to work in the future, and in particular how national, regional and more local commissioning would operate. A number of responses highlighted the need for better clarification on the funding opportunities available for faith-based organisations such as Community Chaplaincy projects.
  4. A number of respondents felt that there could be better mechanisms in place to share good practice on faith-based organisations working with offenders and their families, good commissioning and procurement practice, effective services, and contract monitoring and research. Regional co-ordination, the development of networks and better use of databases and directories could raise awareness and help progress the work of faith-based organisations and promote their work.
  5. Many respondents raised the key challenge for NOMS of engaging the many and diverse organisations that work with offenders and their families or have the potential to do so. The consultation also recognised that there are considerable local and regional variations in the profile, resources, attitudes and practices of faith communities and organisations, and this includes variation within as well as between the different faiths and their ability to engage.
  6. The responses also highlighted a perceived lack of understanding from many policy makers and commissioners have about the role of faith based organisations. This also underpinned concerns about faith organisations proselytising to offenders and the need for guidance on funding faith-based organisations and activity to provide clarity for funders and providers.
- Government Response**
7. Objectives to further engage faith-based organisations are included within the recently published Third Sector Paper, 'Working with the Third Sector to Reduce Re-offending 2009-2011' which sets out the way that Ministry of Justice and NOMS working with partners will better engage with the third sector, as a whole. Our aim is to ensure that faith-based organisations are considered very much within the plan to improve engagement with the third sector. The paper includes actions that will benefit faith-based organisations, as

part of the third sector, as well outlining specific commitments to ensure that faith-based groups have a voice, that their needs are taken into account and that they are effectively involved.

8. We are encouraged by the positive response to the direction of travel set out in the consultation paper for working with faith-based organisations for offenders in custody and the community. In order to make better use of faith based umbrella bodies and networks the Ministry of Justice will support and promote the work being carried out by the Department for Communities and Local Government to create a Charter for Local Authorities and others on funding faith-based organisations.
9. Within in the new NOMS, Prison Service Chaplaincy will be exploring further the opportunities and potential for strengthening partnership work between the prison chaplaincy and the faith based sector to support offender management across the reducing re-offending pathways, for offenders in custody, through the gate and subject to community orders. A conference for faith based organisations and groups is being arranged for the Autumn to look at some of these issues.
10. New Ministry of Justice strategic funding to Clinks, Action for Prisoners Families and the Development Trusts Association will enable them to better represent their members and a wider group of third sector organisations to Government, NOMS and the range of agencies working with and funding the third sector to reduce re-offending; and ensure organisations are provided with information to enable them to engage effectively.
11. Baroness Neuberger, the Government's Volunteering Champion, has begun her review on volunteering across the Criminal Justice System. The focus of her report is likely to be on identifying how volunteering and mentoring can add value to work across the Criminal Justice System and what actions needs to be taken jointly to promote and enhance the role of volunteering by increasing the number, diversity and quality of volunteers.
12. The review will be enhanced by the setting up of a new Reducing Re-offending Volunteering and Mentoring Network to promote collaboration, identify good practice, help increase diversity, and collate examples and evidence. The Network is supported through Ministry of Justice funding to Clinks: £145,000 a year for three years to fund the Network and a range of other activities that support volunteering and mentoring with and by offenders.
13. In addition the Youth Justice Board is considering action in relation to its engagement with faith groups working with young offenders and those at risk of offending.
14. There is a continuing commitment by Government as part of its programme of work to reduce re-offending and protect the public to work effectively with the diverse range of organisations that make up the third sector. NOMS and YJB will ensure that where there are synergies they will work together to push this agenda forward.
15. Ministry of Justice, NOMS and the YJB would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to this consultation.

## Annex A – Responses to specific questions

Responses were received from a wide range of third sector organisations. The analysis below only summarises the views expressed by those who responded to the consultation. A quantitative breakdown of different responses to the questions posed has not been possible. The summary does however attempt to provide an accurate picture of both the direction and tone of responses received.

### Chapter 2 – The role of faith-based organisations in reducing re- Offending

#### a. Are there benefits to faith-based activity to reduce re-offending not identified in this paper?

A high proportion of respondents answered this question. Many emphasised the great reach that faith groups have into local communities and the positive contribution that the faith community can make to creating safer and stronger communities through mentoring, befriending and restorative justice as well as by breaking down stereotypical views of offending:

“Faith based organisations often have strong links with the community and have a great deal of local knowledge which can be of assistance to access relevant support for offenders” Faith based organisation.

A wide range of work with adult and youth offenders, ex-offenders, those at risk of offending and with their families and children was identified as was the holistic, long term commitment to communities that underpins the work of faith groups. Reference to work with offenders was predominately in relation to contact before and after release from custody. Little mention was made of faith groups’ involvement with unpaid work projects even though faith groups were

the commissioners of 7% of unpaid work hours during 2007. The benefits of a holistic approach were seen as being a great strength of faith-based work:

*“Faith-based organisations have a concern for the whole person – physical, mental and spiritual in a social setting and therefore express positive value and reasoning which goes beyond the purely natural limits of any secular society and community”.* Faith based organisation.

#### b. What can we learn from the work of prison chaplaincy and community chaplaincy projects and the links they have with local communities that can help us develop the role of faith-based organisations to support offender management?

Many respondents answered this question and many referred to the good links that the chaplaincy have with hard to reach offenders that assist in making the transition from custody to the community more successful.

“What is often needed is a commitment to work alongside that person for a considerable length of time way beyond the first weeks of release. That is where communities of faith come into their own.” Faith based organisation.

“Community Chaplaincy provides the prisoner with a continuity bridge between the contained world of Prison and the risk-laden world outside – especially in the first few weeks after release.” Faith based organisation.

A number of respondents made the point that work with offenders would be enhanced if there was a greater multi-faith dimension

to chaplaincy work and if it was more widely promoted within NOMS at local, area and regional levels. There would be benefits from Prison and Community chaplaincies having closer links whilst maintaining their differing focuses on pastoral care and resettlement to better support offenders in the community.

**c. How can offender managers access resources and activities offered by faith-based organisations across the reducing re-offending pathways?**

A number of responses to the question highlighted that there was a need for a better understanding within NOMS of the motivation and requirements of faith based organisations as well as their limitations.

The lack of 'faith literacy' both within NOMS (on the ground and at more strategic levels) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) was identified as an issue that needs to be addressed:

"Faith literacy is generally a problem in the statutory and voluntary sector; there should be access to people with a faith background within the sectors or links with community chaplaincies to help offender managers engage". Faith based organisation.

**d. How can we begin to assess the contribution made by faith-based organisations to reducing re-offending?**

It was recognised that this was a complex area and the suggestions put forward by many respondents who answered this question included the importance of funding proper evaluation, the need to measure 'distance travelled' by offenders and to include qualitative as well as quantitative measures.

**e. What specific contribution can the faith-based sector make to working with children and young people and families, particularly to prevent offending?**

Respondents who answered this question identified this as a natural area of strength for faith-based organisations because:

"We are rooted in communities and have access to children, young people and families through our schools, community activities and other projects." Faith based organisation.

This area of work is considered to be underestimated because it is mainly undertaken on a small scale, working with individuals and their families or as part of a wider activity such as youth work, play schemes and after school clubs:

"Faith groups have given longstanding support to families in some of the most deprived parts of the country. Faith groups regularly work with the vulnerable and those at risk." Faith based organisation.

A shared view was that the faith-based organisation is seen as non-threatening and as an advocate and support to the family at large.

**f. What role is there for faith-based schools in working with young people at risk of offending?**

A small number of respondents answered this question and the point was made that

"The fact that they are guided by the 'rules' of their faith can all make a valuable and even vital contribution towards helping young people at risk of offending." Faith based organisation.

### Chapter 3 – Challenges

#### a. Are there barriers to faith groups working with offenders in custody and the community not identified in this paper?

Many respondents commented on this question. The lack of resources, support and infrastructure was identified as a barrier as was ‘faith literacy’. Cultural tensions between NOMS and faith based organisations were mentioned.

There were concerns about faith groups losing their identity and neutrality through working with the public sector that could impact on their relationships with offenders. The point was made by a number of respondents that not all faith communities want to engage with this work, along with a reminder about the homogenous nature of faith based groups: the term ‘faith-based organisations’ covers a diverse range in terms of capacity, interests and history of involvement with the criminal justice system.

Whilst faith groups have a distinctive and valuable contribution to make, commonalities should be identified and their work more fully integrated into the voluntary and community sector. At the same time it is felt important that a strong faith sector voice is maintained within the larger third sector. Third sector infrastructure could be used more effectively to support the faith sector and it was felt that local networks could better meet the needs of small organisations outside the reach of national or regional infrastructure.

#### b. Do you have examples of good practice on overcoming barriers including through multi-agency working?

A fair proportion of respondents answered this question and gave examples of a range of multi-agency work from practical assistance to clients to assist them access services, providing joint training locally, offering brokerage between organisations and mediating between government bodies and faith-based groups.

### Chapter 4 – The way forward

#### a. How could a local demonstration project best deliver learning on the role of faith-based organisations in reducing re-offending?

A low number of respondents answered this question and there was not a consensus on how to progress. The point was made that a ‘one size fits all’ approach would not work and that:

“Any demonstration project must reflect diversity and encourage a willingness to draw on what valuable resources might be available locally.” Faith based organisation.

#### b. What needs doing to improve the faith-based sector’s access to support services, learning and information sharing?

A fair proportion of respondents contributed to this question. A common theme was that faith groups, especially smaller ones, need a better understanding of the third and statutory sectors, and vice versa. It was suggested that:

“A key way forward for increasing faith-based organisations’ engagement is to encourage and support self-organising networks among FBOs and faith communities interested or engaged in this work; this requires only a small

amount of resources and can focus directly on what is needed and helpful.” Faith based organisation.

Joint working, joint commissioning and collaboration would encourage shared learning and would also share risks. Making small faith-based organisations more aware of the support available through the voluntary and community sector would result in capacity building. Respondents are keen to find out ‘what works’ and share good practice. Support and training is needed, particularly in relation to risk management and information sharing. Public sector ‘jargon’ is a barrier as is the lack of clarity within some faith-based organisations about where the resources and power lies within NOMS.

**c. What is best provided by faith-based infrastructure and what by generic infrastructure, and how can they work better together?**

A low number of respondents answered this question. The experience of one faith-based organisation was that:

“Increased partnership and generic infrastructure are most effective in terms of delivery, provided that a strong faith sector voice is maintained. In many areas of work there is a great commonality of concerns and approaches between the faith sector and the wider VCS.” Faith based organisation.

It was also suggested that:

“Evidence from the Capacity Builders ChangeUp and Improving Reach Programmes demonstrate the need for faith based infrastructure organisations to work as a ‘point of contact’ relating to

faith-specific agendas and importantly ‘sign-posting’ faith based organisations to relevant generic infrastructure organisations.” Faith based organisation.

What seems important is that the generic infrastructure is open, accessible and flexible enough to encourage the valuable and specific contribution of small, local faith-based organisations.

**d. How can faith groups working through or with volunteers be supported to achieve best practice and demonstrate impact?**

A number of respondents answered this question. Accredited training programmes were suggested as was the importance of having clear guidance and proper policies to support volunteering. The value of the support offered by CLINKS and the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation was highlighted and it was also suggested that existing bodies such as the Church Urban Fund and Faith Works could support small organisations.

**e. What have prison, probation and YOTs learnt from working with faith-based organisations – how can we best identify and share the learning?**

Low number of respondents answered this question and, whilst there were not any suggestions about how to identify and share learning, there was a common view that faith-based organisations added value to the work of the statutory agencies, with a comment that:

“Hopefully they have learnt that the faith sector offers a great resource of innovative and exciting ideas and committed and enthusiastic volunteers, but that utilising these most effectively

relies on an adequate level of professional support and a genuine commitment to partnership.” Faith based organisation.

**f. Are there good practice examples on removing barriers for women’s and minority faith organisations and promoting diversity?**

Some respondents answered this question. Good practice examples were suggested: the Kikit centre in Birmingham (mentoring for Asian women), West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy’s multi-faith work, the Jericho Road women’s project and the faith based mentoring model used by PS Plus.

**g. What needs doing to improve women’s and minority faith organisations’ access to support and development opportunities? What works currently?**

A small number of respondents answered this question. It was suggested that

“Being able to see what the specific needs of these organisations are is always crucial in understanding what type of support is necessary. It is crucial that such organisations can access constructive support and development advice both from organisations like Clinks and local CVS’s as well as statutory organisations locally in order to work in partnership (but not under contract) to help capacity build services for minority groups in the local area.” Faith based organisation.

Feedback suggested that there needs to be greater understanding of the needs of minority faith groups with more inter-faith and cultural training opportunities to promote involvement. Multi-faith work can be encouraged through regional faith fora.

The observation was made that Christian groups have a long history of working with offenders that is not shared by other faith groups:

“We are conscious that the innovative and effective initiatives that faith based organisations can characteristically develop often start from very small local initiatives that are most often nurtured first of all within faith community networks. In particular, minority faith-based groups are presently almost entirely excluded because they do not have the capacity to engage”. Faith based organisation.

**h. What needs doing to improve multi-faith collaboration and activity? Are there good practice examples?**

A fair number of respondents answered this question. It was suggested that the creation of umbrella bodies where all faiths can have a voice would be helpful:

“This may need to be led by majority faith communities and/or the statutory sector, but sensitive awareness of the need not to dominate is vital.” Faith based organisation.

There needs to be a better understanding of the difficulties faced by organisations wanted to conduct a multi-faith project and it is important to have a way of measuring whether an organisation is truly multi-faith.

“As it becomes more popular to ask for multi-faith project rather than single faith initiatives it will be essential to understand what you are looking for an organisation to do if it is to become multi-faith.” Faith based organisation.

## Annex B – List of respondents

Believing We Can Responses	No. of responses	
Prisons/Youth Offender Institutions	2	Leeds, Everthorpe,
Prisoners	2	HMP Leeds & Newhall
Probation	4	London, N Wales, West Yorks,
East of England Regional Offender Manager,		
Community Chaplaincies	4	Opengate, West Leeds, Feltham, Swansea,
Prison Chaplaincies	4	Chaplaincy HQ, Everthorpe, Rochester, Doncaster
Christian Faith groups	7	Cumbria Churches Together, Guildford Diocese, Ripon & Leeds Diocese, Church Urban Fund, West London Mission, Peterlee Mission, Kainos Community
Other Faith groups	2	Network of Buddhist Organisations, Muslim Chaplaincy Network
Multi faith groups	4	Yorkshire & Humberside Faith Forum, West Midlands Faith Forum, Faith Action, Altrincham Interfaith Forum
Faith conferences	2	YOI Glen Parva, YOI Thorne Cross
Voluntary and Private Sector organisations	9	Nacro, Anawin, PS Plus, Kalyx, Clinks, Penrose Housing, Stepping Stones, Sea secure, Innova
Humanist Associations	2	Essex Humanist Society, British Humanist Association
Other groups	1	Napo
Individual responses	25	
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	

### Feedback from Consultation Events

- Event at HMP/YOI Glenn Parva (Approx 51 attendees)
- Event at HMP/YOI Thorne Cross (Approx 103 attendees)

**Consultation Co-ordinator  
contact details**

If you have any complaints or comments about the **consultation process** rather than about the topic covered by this paper, you should contact Gabrielle Kann, Ministry of Justice Consultation Co-ordinator, on 020 7210 1326, or email her at [consultation@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@justice.gsi.gov.uk).

Alternatively, you may wish to write to the address below:

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If your complaints or comments refer to the topic covered by this paper rather than the consultation process, please direct them to the contact given on page 3.

## The consultation criteria

**The six consultation criteria are as follows:**

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

**These criteria must be reproduced within all consultation documents.**



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