

West Midlands Faith Alliance  
Strategy 2024 – 2026

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A STRATEGY BY  
AND FOR FAITH  
COMMUNITIES



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# AUTHORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategy document has been prepared and compiled on behalf of the Faith Alliance by the team at the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, in particular: Fred Kratt, Sara Roach, Nikki Penniston, Pooja Kaur, and Shazelle Punjabi.

This strategy would not exist without the contributions of members of the Faith Alliance network and beyond who took part in the co-production of this strategy. Thank you to all who got involved. We would like to extend our particular thanks to the Faith Alliance Executive and Steering Groups for their hard work, guidance and leadership.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West Midlands Faith Alliance is a multi-faith and community-led regional network, supported and facilitated by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (WMVRP), working to equip, enable and empower communities of all faiths and none, to better understand and prevent violence. The West Midlands is defined as the West Midlands Police Force area (Wolverhampton in the west, through Birmingham, to Coventry in the east).

This document outlines a three-year strategy for the Faith Alliance, using findings from a multi-stage process of co-production with faith communities and young people. The strategy is based on four strategic pillars ('Listen', 'Connect', 'Act', and 'Share'), each with key objectives to achieve between January 2024 and December 2026.

In the first quarter of 2024, this document shall be supplemented by further research and co-production in order to create distinct Action Plans for each of the four pillars, including timelines, metrics and budgets for the three-year period. Four 'Pillar Delivery Groups' (PDGs) shall be established for this purpose, each requiring renewed collective efforts and community leadership.

Our hope is that this strategy, based on the asks of young people and communities, will not only provide direction to work of the Faith Alliance in the West Midlands, but will also go on to spark conversations across the country, from government, to Violence Reduction Units, to police chiefs to faith leaders, on the important role faith communities have to play in keeping neighbourhoods safe for all.



# FOREWORDS



## WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

I welcome the Faith Alliance strategy 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 we maximise the potential of faith communities to prevent and reduce violence – whether that be, for example, by providing opportunities for young people, utilising the resource of volunteering or making community assets available.

I am keen to engage with, listen to and work with the diverse Faith Groups of the West Midlands, in a collaborative way, in order to implement the strategy. I am pleased that our Faith Alliance is leading the way and supporting other Violence Reduction Units and Police and Crime Commissioners, to increase their engagement with faith groups.

The Faith Alliance illustrates that, whether from the same or different backgrounds, we must all work together collectively, if we are 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 strategy will enable us to do exactly that. I commend the Faith Alliance for the leadership it has shown through the preparation of the strategy.

**Simon Foster**

## WEST MIDLANDS VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP DIRECTOR

At the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, we are proud of the way that the West Midlands Faith Alliance has developed and is facilitating partnerships between people of all faiths and none, and promoting public health and faith-based approaches to reducing violence.

I welcome the publication of this strategy as a significant step on the Faith Alliance's journey of mobilising communities in order to make the West Midlands a safer region for everyone, in particular young people.

The development of this strategy has also been a great example of co-production, as communities and young people have participated in meaningful opportunities to shape and design the strategy. As the title suggests, it is a strategy by and for faith communities.

We are also delighted to see that the work the Faith Alliance is pioneering in the West Midlands, is inspiring others across the country to do similar work and we look forward to seeing this continue over the next few years.

There is much work to do if the vision laid out in this strategy is to become a reality, but I am confident that if we work together and continue to recognise and maximise the role all communities can play in reducing violence, we can make a significant difference.

**Sara Roach**

## FAITH ALLIANCE CO-CHAIRS

Many of us, as leaders and active individuals in our respective communities, operate out of some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the West Midlands. We see and hear about violent crime on an almost daily basis. In response, we are compelled to work tirelessly and tackle these social issues at their root.

Faith communities have always had a way of reaching and connecting with individuals and families, supporting them for the better, in a way that statutory partners alone, cannot. As people of faith, we recognise our God-given responsibility to safeguard all life and help play our part in pursuing the Common Good. We wish to work with others, of all faiths and none, who share similar values and seek similar goals, in particular the reduction of violence in our neighbourhoods. This was the reason why the Faith Alliance was first established.

As Co-Chairs of the Faith Alliance, we've seen some great work since our first meeting in 2019. We have collectively rolled out a Toolkit, shared best practice, initiated grassroots projects, facilitated networking opportunities and supported each other in becoming a strong group of over 430 members.

However, we are now at a critical point – the launch of our three-year strategy, designed with our communities and young people. This next stage is about how we evolve and accelerate initiatives, and rollout good practice on a wider scale. It's of the utmost importance that we now work together and deliver the positive changes on the ground that we all want to see, whether we are people of faith or not. We therefore encourage you to join a Pillar Delivery Group (PDG) and help make this strategy a reality.

It's critical that we all stay involved on this journey. Everyone's role is invaluable. As a whole, we are stronger together. We choose to #BelieveInHope. We thank you in advance for all your work, support and counsel on this journey.

**Revd Dr Carver Anderson and Kamran Hussain**



# SECTION 1

## THE FAITH ALLIANCE'S VISION

### What is the Faith Alliance?

The Faith Alliance is a multi-faith and community-led regional network working to equip, enable and empower communities of all faiths and none, to better understand and prevent violence. The network is supported and facilitated by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, which itself sits within the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. The Faith Alliance is the first regional, multi-faith network of its kind in the UK, bringing together public health and faith-based approaches to preventing violence.

Published in 2022, our Toolkit for Faith Communities, provides more information about our origins and the basis of our belief that faith communities are a crucial, but so far largely untapped, partner in strategies to reduce violence. The Toolkit also shows how faith-based approaches to reducing violence are already underway in the many existing projects and initiatives delivered by faith communities across the West Midlands. The Faith Alliance has been working to bring these diverse communities and projects together into a cohesive and sustainable movement for positive change.

### Our work

The Faith Alliance is a network, but what sets the Faith Alliance apart from other networks are the following key characteristics.

- + **Focused on preventing violence** - our primary objective is the prevention and reduction of violence, especially violence affecting young people
- + **Multi-faith** – we bring together individuals of many different faiths and none. All communities are affected by violence and have a role to play in addressing it.
- + **Multi-sector** – we are committed to building trust and strong partnerships between the public, private and third sectors.
- + **Multi-scalar** - we see the value of working at local, regional and national scales to influence policy and practice.
- + **Community-led** – we are led by faith leaders and activists who are embedded in local communities and committed to the welfare of all in the West Midlands.
- + **Youth empowering** - we recognise and champion the need for more young people to be

involved in our work and the decisions that affect them. Young people are the leaders of now, as well as leaders of the future.

- + **Action-orientated** – we are a network, but cannot remain just a network. Strategies and action plans are required if tangible differences are to be made to the everyday lives of young people and communities affected by violence

### Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change is a model that sets out the Faith Alliance's vision and mission statements. We use it to help us visualise the transformation that we believe can be achieved when we work together. At the roots of the Faith Alliance are a set of shared values which can be owned by people of any faith or none. These values are beautifully articulated in the words of the 'Declaration of Hope', the Faith Alliance's call to action, which can be found on the back cover of this document.

## 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.





### Our journey so far

Since its founding in 2019, and in particular since the lifting of COVID lockdown restrictions in 2021, the Faith Alliance network has seen significant growth in membership from 30 members in February 2020 to over 430 members in November 2023. Such growth demonstrates an increasing awareness and desire on the part of faith communities to do what they can to help save lives from violence and build up safer neighbourhoods for all.

Until now, much of the Faith Alliance's activity has been focused on securing strong foundations for what we know will be many years of hard work to enact meaningful and lasting change. This has included creating opportunities for networking and linking together faith-based organisations that have been working to prevent violence for generations. It has also included preparing training and resources to support and build the capacity of the network. You can read more about what the Faith Alliance has delivered over the last two years in Appendix A.

It is also worth noting that the definition of violence as understood by this strategy has been shaped by the Serious Violence Duty, introduced in 2023. The work of the VRP prior to this, and therefore also of the Faith Alliance, had a particular interest in reducing serious youth violence. This continues to be the main priority however the Duty also discusses how other forms of violence in the community (e.g. Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse, Exploitation, Modern Slavery etc.) interact with violence affecting young people. This strategy adopts this broader definition, as faith communities are impacted by and can help to prevent many forms of violence, but there will be a continued focus on preventing harm against young people.





# SECTION 2

## THE FAITH ALLIANCE STRATEGY 2024-2026

### Why a strategy?

Towards the end of 2022, it became increasingly clear that in order to bring about tangible and sustainable change on the ground, the Faith Alliance needed to be more than a network. The Faith Alliance also needed stronger governance and a long-term strategy, against which evidence of collective impact could be measured. In particular, the strategy needed to identify a few priority objectives which could provide focus to the Faith Alliance's work going forward and against which progress could be evaluated. It also needed to be shaped and owned by faith communities and young people themselves. Whilst we recognise that the task of significantly reducing violence will take many years, perhaps even decades, this three-year strategy enables us to identify some 'quick wins' as well as pilot approaches that, if successful, could be replicated and expanded over several more years.

### Developing the strategy

In January 2023, a Faith Alliance Steering Group was established, consisting of 18 faith leaders and activists of various ages, faiths, genders and backgrounds. What brought this group together was experience in mobilising faith communities and a passion for working together across faiths. The purpose of the Steering Group would be to support

the Executive Group (two Co-Chairs, a strategic advisor and a VRP staff member), and take a leadership role in shaping the priorities for the Faith Alliance going forward. The Steering Group was also consulted on a regular basis throughout 2023, prior to and during the process of developing the strategy.

The decision was made by the Steering Group to pursue a process of community and youth co-production that would result in the publication of a three-year strategy. The Local Government Association defines co-production as 'a relationship in which professionals and citizens share power to plan and deliver support together, recognising that both partners have vital expertise.'<sup>1</sup> Giving faith communities control was important because too many times in the past have statutory agencies damaged the trust of communities by imposing projects, that had been designed elsewhere without the involvement of communities themselves.

It was also important that the process of co-production consisted of multiple stages as this would provide more opportunities for more people, of various ages and backgrounds, to take part in the development of the strategy. A mixed-methods approach to data collection was taken, that would yield both quantitative and qualitative data, capturing more meaningful information and providing richer insights. The research stage involved

several activities, including surveys, roundtables, written contributions and a youth voice workshop. You can see an overview of the key stages of the co-production process that took place between February 2023 and November 2023 in Appendix B. The overview also includes the key results of each activity and a brief analysis of those results.

A sense of what young people and faith communities raised and asked for through the course of the co-production process is shared on pages 12 and 13.



(1) Co-production | Local Government Association

### Introduction to the Strategy

The strategy outlined over the next few pages is best described as a 'statement of intent'. It's intention is to highlight the priorities that faith communities and young people have told us they would like to see the Faith Alliance address between 2024 and 2026.

What this document does not yet include are Action Plans for how those priorities shall be met, including budgets, timelines and metrics (ways of measuring impact). This will require additional work that is detailed in Section 3 of this document. We have taken the decision to publish this document, without the Action Plans, to mark the significance of what has been achieved so far by the Faith Alliance, to sustain momentum and to invite others, including individuals and organisations, to get involved in the next stage.

### The Four Pillars

There are four pillars that underpin this strategy, each of which have evolved in meaning and content over the course of several months and as data, from each of the co-production activities, has been collected. They represent the key roles that the Faith Alliance should be performing in order to achieve the vision and mission as set out in the Theory of Change. These pillars are entitled 'Listen', 'Connect',

'Act' and 'Share'. Verbs ('doing words') have been chosen for their titles to indicate that this strategy needs intentional and ongoing investment of time, resources and energy.

The pillars provide a simple structure to the strategy, and are broad enough to capture a variety of actions and flexible enough to evolve to arising needs as the years progress. The pillars can also be read sequentially, starting with listening to our communities, then connecting existing partners and assets, then acting by expanding current projects and establishing new ones, and finally sharing what works with others. They are inspired by the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), starting with and building on the existing strengths of communities.

We are aware that the themes contained in each of the pillars may at times overlap and interact with each other. Duplication has been avoided as each pillar has a clear aim and two specific strategic objectives, which must be achieved in their own right. Underneath each strategic objective is a summary of the key points and ideas for projects gleaned from the various stages of the co-production process, that provide more detail on how that objective might be delivered. They are, however, at this time listed only as options, as Pillar Delivery Groups will be ultimately responsible for agreeing final projects and metrics.

# Key quotes from young people and communities

"We definitely need more youth workers and mentors but ones that understand what our life is like."

**(Safer Together research participant)**

"Victims of DV (Domestic Violence and Abuse) unlikely to come forward because of the stigma and further there is little encouragement from community leaders to openly and objectively talk about these real issues."

**(Written contribution from participant)**

"We need youth centres. Lots of them. Too many dormant community buildings but no funds or strategy to use these places."

**(Written contribution from participant)**

"For me, it is just easier and safer being around people with the same skin colour, race or religion, as there is less chance of violence."

**(Young person of faith, Safer Together research participant)**

"We are unable to comment on rate of domestic violence or abuse of any kind – lack of research into this by agencies/bodies and conversations (focus groups) within community results in lack of understanding of what to do and how to tackle such issues. An assumption should not be made that there is no domestic violence or abuse. It's just that we [are] just do not know."

**(Written contribution from participant)**

"I wish there were more community spaces and stuff online."

**(Quote from young person)**

"Umm yeah, because they feel poor and they need to go steal something. Then they feel like they need to use violence. And so if we help them and they don't have to do that"

**(Quote from young person)**

"like you've [got] youth centres and places like that for people to go, because then all people on the streets not having anything to do anywhere to go there's somewhere"

**(Quote from young person)**

"Difficult to gain funding as there appears to be a concern that the project is fronted by a faith group."

**(Written contribution)**

"Being a young female...because of the culture... they won't really listen to me as much"

**(Quote from young person)**

"People like them older, the older people. Older generation... They don't ask you, they don't ask the question"

**(Quote from young person)**

**PILLAR 1: LISTEN****Aim**

To create opportunities to engage, listen to and co-produce solutions with communities and young people.

**Strategic Objectives****A. Create more opportunities for young people's voices to be heard**

- Establish leadership pathways for young people within their faith communities and within the Faith Alliance.
- Challenge faith leaders to create a culture where young voices are respected.
- Incentivise young people to be involved by valuing their contributions.
- Entrust young people with budgets and power to make decisions.

**B. Facilitate deeper listening within and between faith communities.**

- Create safe spaces where people's lived experiences can be heard and others seek to be relatable, have empathy and try to understand the issues behind the crime.
- Open spaces for dialogue and inter-generational listening, including a willingness to have difficult conversations and go outside one's comfort zone (e.g. mental health, 'hidden harms' and 'taboo' topics).
- Ensure minority and under-represented voices are heard, and intersectionality considered e.g. faith and gender.

**PILLAR 2: CONNECT****Aim**

To provide opportunities for Faith Alliance members to connect and collaborate with each other.

**Strategic Objectives****A. Organise more regular in-person, localised and regional events**

- Create regular 'touchpoint' events during the year to check in, connect and network, and monitor progress (e.g. strategy days, conferences and working groups). Use events to identify skills and expertise of FA members.
- Have forum/events on particular topics or forms of violence.
- Create a sense of movement, breaking down barriers between communities.
- Ensure civic and faith leaders are present to give support and time.
- Increase visits to schools to improve connections with young people, families and parents.

**B. Improve awareness of other faith-based projects are taking place across the region**

- Update and promote the use of the Faith Alliance Connect Directory as a tool for scoping and mapping faith-based services, avoiding duplication, increasing signposting and working together to deliver services.
- Pull together and better integrate existing faith networks, improving communication between faith communities and emphasising shared values.

**PILLAR 3: ACT****Aim**

To train and equip faith communities to act and deliver violence reduction projects and initiatives across the West Midlands.

**Strategic Objectives****A. Provide more training for faith leaders and young people**

- Ensure current training offers are available in a central place and promoted on a larger scale amongst faith communities. Train the trainer models to foster sustainability and ensuring that training is repeated regularly.
- Utilise the Faith Alliance to ask what training is needed and co-design training and resources with communities e.g. safeguarding, engaging with young people, dialogue, mental health.

**B. Build local inter-faith collaborative partnerships to deliver violence prevention projects**

- Promote hyper-local Faith Alliance networks that can pool resources and share skills, as well as seek funding for projects together. Build trust between faith communities and statutory bodies through collaboration.
- Create more local, open access safe spaces for young people, which has been identified as a particular priority.

**PILLAR 4: SHARE****Aim**

To collate, publish and share best practice/learning among the Faith Alliance regional network and across the country.

**Strategic Objectives****A. Share and celebrate good news and success stories**

- Identify and promote good news and success stories on a regular basis (e.g. via social media), including use of visible engagement campaigns that use creative art and role models across key neighbourhoods.
- Create communications resources e.g. Faith Alliance podcast, book, live noticeboard, social media etc.
- Establish Faith Alliance awards to celebrate young people and organisations who are contributing to the reduction of violence in their communities.

**B. Ensure collection of data, good evaluation and publishing of annual impact reports**

- Collect and share relevant and timely data that helps to inform decision-making and influence perceptions versus reality.
- Lobby for national policy change, including greater recognition of faith communities' contribution and for more funding opportunities.
- Share existing best practice and encourage other Violence Reduction Units and police forces to improve their engagement with faith communities in their efforts to reduce violence.



# SECTION 3

## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

### Action Plans

In order to realise this vision and deliver on the strategic pillars consistently, strong governance and dedicated community leadership is required. Structures also need to be set up that can help develop four Action Plans, one for each pillar. These Action Plans should include:

- + Priority projects and initiatives (inspired by the strategic objectives)
- + Multi-year milestones
- + Multi-year budget
- + Multi-year resources plan (including administrative support and fundraising plans)
- + Three detailed 12-month plans, with detailed budgets
- + Metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as measures of success

### Pillar Delivery Groups

We shall therefore establish four 'Pillar Delivery Groups' (PDGs) to create the Action Plans corresponding to each pillar. These PDGs will bring together leading faith activists, young people and statutory partners, who

shall undertake further research and co-production, and decide what projects should be set and how their impact is to be measured. We shall seek to partner with a university-based evaluation team who can provide guidance on setting realistic and measurable goals. The four PDGs will be responsible for developing and completing their own Action Plans in the first quarter of 2024 (meetings in January, February and March 2023).

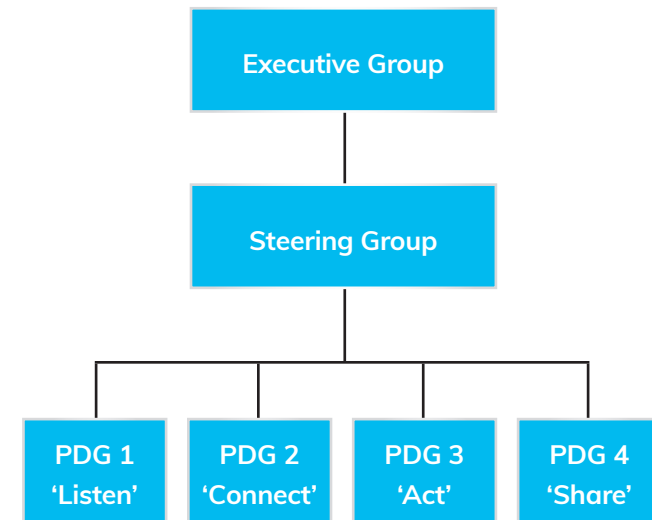
The PDGs will continue to meet regularly until the end of 2026, as they will also be responsible for delivering the Action Plans that they design. Two Co-Chairs shall be appointed to lead each PDG, and will be primarily accountable to the Steering Group (see below) for ensuring progress against their PDG's goals. Each PDG will meet on a bi-monthly basis (every 8 weeks), have a Terms of Reference, and administrative and logistical support will be provided by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP).

### Governance

All PDG Co-Chairs (8 in total) shall report to the Faith Alliance Steering Group and that shall also meet on a bi-monthly basis (between meetings of PDGs). The Steering Group shall consist of no more than 15 community members in total (including PDG chairs), with relevant statutory and evaluation partners invited as observers. The function of the Steering

Group is to provide ongoing oversight, accountability, advice and guidance to the PDGs to deliver the pillars.

The Steering Group shall in turn support the Faith Alliance Executive Group (3 overall Faith Alliance Co-Chairs) who shall meet on a fortnightly basis to take overall leadership and responsibility for the Faith Alliance and represent the network on the VRP Strategic Board and to external partners.



### Funding

Whilst elements of this strategy shall not be costly to deliver (e.g. pillars 'Listen' and 'Share'), other objectives (e.g. within pillars 'Connect' and 'Act') will require more substantial funding, for example, putting on regular community events and expanding existing projects and initiatives or establishing new ones. However, we believe that there is a lot that can be achieved without additional funding, by working with existing assets and sharing resources and skills between communities.

Some funding shall be available centrally from the VRP, however larger sums of funding shall be needed from external sources in order to enact more significant changes. Cultivating a collaborative culture between Faith Alliance network members shall encourage groups of organisations to apply for funding together (known as consortia bids). This shall also provide opportunities for larger organisations to support smaller ones, and build up the network's overall capacity. The VRP also support the Faith Alliance by providing fundraising expertise and guidance.

### Evaluation

Robust long-term evaluation is needed if we are to demonstrate that the strategy is having the impact we hope for. There are options to commission evaluations of particular faith-based projects and interventions, or to commission a more extensive longitudinal evaluation that tracks the impact of the network over the strategy's three-year lifespan. Evaluation is also important as collecting evidence of what works is critical to opening up access to larger funding opportunities in the future.

Evaluation is ideally undertaken by a university department or research consultancy. In both cases, we may need funds to commission any third party to evaluate the Faith Alliance's work. Securing an evaluation partner is a priority to ensure that the work of the Pillar Delivery Groups is guided by evidence from the start.

### Advocacy

Whilst aspects of advocacy may fall under the 'Share' pillar, it is important to provide more detail as to our ambitions in this space. Since the pandemic there has been an increased interest on the part of national, regional and local government to partner with faith communities as organisations that can provide frontline services and provide a bridge with sections of the community that statutory partners, who are generally less trusted, are less able to connect with.

On a national level, we shall continue to encourage other Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and Police and Crime Commissioners to increase their engagement with faith communities in their strategies to tackle violence. How this looks shall be very different depending on the local demographic and institutional landscape. We are less concerned with whether other VRUs adopt a model like the Faith Alliance or another model, provided they are proactive in engaging their local faith communities in the work of reducing violence.

We shall also continue to engage with national bodies such as the Home Office, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the College of Policing, the

Youth Endowment Fund and others to encourage them to better recognise and promote the role of faith communities in preventing violence and open up further funding and evaluation opportunities for faith-based initiatives.

### Conclusion

In summary, this document has outlined the research and co-production with young people and communities that has taken place over the course of a number of months, asking for their views on what the Faith Alliance should be prioritising over the next three years. This process has resulted in four strategic pillars, each with key objectives. This document sets the foundation for further work to come, the development of the Pillar Action Plans, to be completed in the first quarter of 2024. A comprehensive document, comprising both the strategy and the Action Plans shall then be published, and implemented between Spring 2024 and December 2026. Thank you for your involvement in this journey so far, and we look forward to your continued support and participation.





# SECTION 4

## APPENDICES Appendix A: Faith Alliance actions and resources (2022-23)

Date (since)	Action	Description
Apr 2022	Publish regular newsletters	Faith Alliance news and updates, along with opportunities relevant to the network, including training, funding, events, jobs, consultations, campaigns and resources.
Jun 2022	Released a short film	Based on the words of the 'Declaration of Hope', the film shares the Faith Alliance's call to action and showcases the range of existing faith-based violence prevention activity being carried out across the West Midlands.
Jul 2022	Published a Toolkit for Faith Communities	Pioneering 88-page resource, co-produced with faith groups, outlines why faith communities should be involved in the work of violence reduction, and how they can go about it practically, based on best practice.
Jul 2022	Held the Faith Alliance Summit	Hosted at Coventry Cathedral, the event included the launch of the Toolkit, youth panels, music and spoken word, speeches, Q&A, and signing of pledges to participate in tackling violence in the West Midlands.
Oct – Dec 2022	Ran six 'Roadshow' workshops	Workshops taking the Toolkit to the different areas of the region, gathering local faith leaders and activists along with statutory representatives to discuss how the best practice in the Toolkit could be applied locally.
Mar – Jun 2023	Hosted a 'Faith and...' webinar series	Series of webinars explored how the work of Faith Alliance intersects with and compliments other WMVRP workstreams such as sports, education and criminal justice.
Nov 2023	Launched the Connect Directory	Interactive online directory enables users to filter and contact member organisations of the Faith Alliance. It is a key way to showcase the wide range of faith-based violence reduction activity taking place across the region.

## Appendix B: Co-production Results and Analysis

Stage	Activity	Purpose	Results	Analysis
Preparation	Steering Group workshop  16th February 2023, (Green Lane Masjid & Community Centre)	To agree 3/4 key strategic aims for the Faith Alliance over the next 3 years	<p>Nine members of the Steering Group participated. Four 'pillars' were identified but specific objectives and metrics were left undefined, pending consultation with the wider network and young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Listen</b> – to communities and young people</li> <li>• <b>Connect</b> – organisations and partners together</li> <li>• <b>Act</b> – deliver faith-based projects and interventions</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> – best practice regionally and nationally</li> </ul>	<p>Initial discussions identified three key themes from an original list of six potential priorities: 'Establish Platform for Raising Awareness'; 'Building Resilience' (and capacity); and 'Sharing Good Practice and Training'.</p> <p>It was agreed by consensus that these themes would be re-articulated into four clear 'pillars' which more simply summed up the underlying priorities and used active verbs to demonstrate desire for real change.</p>
Research	WMVRP/Faith Alliance survey  August 2023	To survey the public on the role of faith communities and possible Faith Alliance priorities.	<p>1251 survey responses were received from the public.</p> <p>Key results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 56% said 'Yes', that faith communities did have a role to play in preventing violence. 30% said 'Maybe'.</li> <li>• Only 17% said they were aware of violence reduction activities organised by faith communities.</li> <li>• 58% said 'No' when asked if they wanted to be more involved in the FA. 18% said 'Yes'.</li> <li>• When asked what top three priorities the FA should have, the most popular answers were 'Youth Spaces', 'Tackling Exploitation and Abuse', and 'Education'.</li> </ul>	<p>Some 86% of those surveyed believed that faith communities had or maybe had a role to play, which demonstrates the need for the Faith Alliance network.</p> <p>Only 17% said they were aware of faith-based projects, which indicates a need for better publicity and promotion of existing services.</p> <p>Only 18% of respondents said they wanted to get more involved in the network, which is low. However, it was not outlined what involvement might look like (e.g. time commitment), which may have put some people off.</p> <p>It is significant that providing youth spaces is associated with faith groups. Tackling exploitation and abuse may also refer to the need for faith communities to improve their safeguarding practices.</p>



Stage	Activity	Purpose	Results	Analysis
Research	Strategy Day  26th September 2023 (The Legacy Centre)	To ask Faith Alliance members to identify key objectives and metrics under each pillar.	<p>This event involved around 80 people engaging in discussions around tables, focusing on adding detail to the four pillars. Participants were asked, for each pillar, to identify current good practice, suggest possible further work, and refine 3 priority objectives, along with ways of measuring impact (metrics).</p> <p>Responses were coded (grouped into similar categories), with each pillar having 2 or 3 main codes. These were:</p> <p>Pillar 1 (Listen): Empowering Young People; Facilitating deep listening and sharing; Reaching out to faith groups</p> <p>Pillar 2 (Connect): Organising local, in-person inter-faith meetings and events; Increase collaboration and signposting; Increase representation and minority voices</p> <p>Pillar 3 (Act): Training; Communications; New collaborative partnerships</p> <p>Pillar 4 (Share): Directory; Collecting qualitative data and stories/awards; Annual reports/evaluation</p>	<p>There was overlap in some codes across the different pillars, which demonstrated that the pillars work on inter-linked topics. For example, raising awareness of existing faith-based projects was mentioned in both Pillar 2 (Connect) and Pillar 4 (Share). We therefore had to decide which pillar was most suitable for each repeated code, to avoid duplication.</p> <p>Based on these decisions and frequency of mentions, two priority objectives were selected and articulated for each pillar. Any third objectives where integrated into other objectives. Further details and ideas for each objective were also recorded. It was decided to omit metrics as these would be decided by future Pillar Delivery Groups.</p> <p><b>Pillar 1 (Listen):</b> Create more opportunities for young people's voices to be heard; Facilitate deeper listening within and between faith communities.</p> <p><b>Pillar 2 (Connect):</b> Organise more regular in-person, localised (and regional) events; Improve awareness of other faith-based projects that are taking place across the region.</p> <p><b>Pillar 3 (Act):</b> Provide more training for faith leaders and young people (e.g. safeguarding, how to engage young people); Build local inter-faith collaborative partnerships to deliver violence prevention projects.</p> <p><b>Pillar 4 (Share):</b> Ensure qualitative data is collected and good news stories are shared and celebrated; Ensure good evaluation, collection of data and publishing of annual impact reports.</p>

Stage	Activity	Purpose	Results	Analysis
Research	Written contributions  16th October – 1st November	To ask individual faith communities about their actions and challenges	<p>Leaders of faith networks were approached to answer the following questions. Six responses were received.</p> <p>Respondents raised a number of forms of violence they were concerned about including youth violence, hate crime, domestic abuse, community tensions, and 'taboo' issues.</p> <p><b>1. What work is currently happening across your faith community to address and/or tackle violence?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants mentioned youth clubs, CCTV, community and youth workshops, inter-faith meetings, work to tackle domestic abuse and hate crime, youth development and mentoring programmes.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. What – if any – obstacles or barriers are there within your faith community to addressing and/or tackling violence?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants mentioned a lack of research into violence in specific faith communities (lack of knowledge), difficulties to getting funding (being a faith-based organisation), lack of funding, unspoken and hidden topics in communities, lack of trained volunteers and staff, lack of support for families.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. What support is needed to overcome these barriers, as well as any additional support in addressing and/or tackling violence?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants mentioned more training, more funding, more mental health support, long-term support for families, including men and women, more youth centres, and more culturally sensitive support from police.</li> </ul>	<p>The range of violence types discussed suggests the wide range of harms that community members would like the Faith Alliance to consider in their strategy. Other issues were also raised including mental health, health and wellbeing clinics, and racism.</p> <p>There is already good work taking place in communities, but the question is how do we raise awareness of these services, connect providers, and increase provision?</p> <p>Funding and training are key concerns, but things that the Faith Alliance by working together and sharing resources could help resolve.</p> <p>Specific types of projects or interventions are mentioned such as mental health support, family support and youth work. These could be joint projects between faith communities. The VRP can also train the police to be more culturally sensitive.</p>



Stage	Activity	Purpose	Results	Analysis
Research	<p>Safer Together youth voice consultation</p> <p>Analysed October 2023</p>	To review another youth consultation about violence reduction	<p>Safer Together were commissioned by WMVRP to develop a regional violence reduction strategy. Focus groups, surveys and interviews were conducted with 189 young people. Relevant insights from young people included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns about “no go zones”, places and spaces.</li> <li>High levels of fear of violence and harm. Fear was in some instances impacting how children and young people lived their lives.</li> <li>Some young people, living in the most disadvantaged parts of our region expressed a lack of hope and optimism for the future.</li> <li>Many young people felt there was a lack of provision or accessible positive activities in their community or they did not know what was available to them.</li> <li>Some young people talked about feeling “undervalued and unheard”.</li> <li>Some young people lived in communities where they had been subjected to racism or were fearful of it. They felt there is a greater need for work to be done to create communities that respected differences in faith and culture.</li> <li>Young people also expressed how there is a lack of education and understanding around tolerance and equality, but the role of community leaders and faith leaders in the community plays a vital role in building tolerance, understanding and community cohesion; factors that when lacking impact on feeling of safety and inclusion.</li> </ul>	<p>The Faith Alliance may seek to identify where the ‘no-go’ areas are and mobilise local faith groups within those areas to work together and create a counter-narrative based on local action to prevent violence.</p> <p>Fear of violence is a serious concern among many young people. Young people also express a lack of hope and optimism for the future. There is a potential role for faith communities to help provide hope and overcome fear among young people. There is a perceived lack of provision for young people in local communities. Local faith communities could consider working together to increase provision for young people by pooling resources and assets.</p> <p>Young people don’t feel heard, perhaps there is a role for faith communities to lead the way in creating spaces for young people to be heard and valued within their own structures and settings.</p> <p>There are concerns about racism and community tensions, with young people identifying faith communities as key to helping young people understand and respect differences, which will in turn help young people feel safer in their communities.</p>

Stage	Activity	Purpose	Results	Analysis
Research	<p>Youth Voice workshop</p> <p>2nd November 2023</p>	To gather young people from different faiths and ask what the Faith Alliance should prioritise	<p>Workshop involving 12 Birmingham-based participants aged between 11-17 (7 Girls, 5 boys) of mixed religious affiliation including various Christian denominations, Muslim and Sikh backgrounds.</p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>What kind of violence affects young people in your neighbourhoods, schools and communities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Punch” physical violence</li> <li>Verbal abuse leading to violence</li> <li>Bullying and harassment</li> <li>War</li> </ul> <p><b>Part 1: The role of faith communities - Do you think faith communities have a role in helping to reduce and prevent violence affecting young people?</b></p> <p>Unanimous agreement from YPs that faith communities have a role in helping the community and therefore that will help reduce and prevent violence</p> <p>What might this role be?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping people</li> <li>Charity work – in local communities and oversees charity work in places of war/conflict e.g. – supporting homeless people</li> <li>Educating YPs on violence in communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Perceptions of violence</b></p> <p>Young People (YP) in this group did not necessarily associate violence to serious youth violence in the first instance. From the examples given such as war and oversees conflict, the perception of violence was wide and less directly impactful. This shows awareness and sensitivity of YPs to wider social issues. For violence affecting their age group more directly, YPs identified violence as a secondary act to things such as verbal abuse and bullying.</p> <p><b>Part 1</b></p> <p>In discussion the YPs saw violence as strongly linked with poverty and other types of crime (e.g. theft) and so advocated for faith groups to support community services that would also tackle wider social issues.</p> <p>YP’s also highlighted the role of faith communities and leaders to more generally support YPs. YPs were knowledgeable on drivers behind violence using phrases such as “root cause”.</p>



Stage	Activity	Purpose	Results	Analysis
Research	Youth Voice workshop  2nd November 2023	To gather young people from different faiths and ask what the Faith Alliance should prioritise	<p><b>Part 2: Faith Alliance priorities -Which projects/interventions should be priorities for the Faith Alliance over the next three years?</b></p> <p>Priorities told to YPs and explained (difficult to explain/differentiate to YPs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training – least popular</li> <li>• communication</li> <li>• youth spaces – 1st most popular</li> <li>• pastoral care</li> <li>• education - 2nd most popular</li> <li>• community services - 3rd most popular</li> <li>• tackling exploitation and abuse</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional points made by YPs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith leads need to talk more about violence, why it's bad and connect conversation with faith – education/communication</li> <li>• Money to charity/supporting the poor, poverty leads to crime, crime leads to violence</li> <li>• Counselling support to teenagers in school, mental health issues linked to violence</li> </ul> <p><b>Part 3: The role of young people - Do you feel young people's voices are heard in faith communities?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50/50</li> <li>• Depends on who you talk to</li> <li>• In the Methodist church there are youth groups and youth presidents who are 18-21 and they listen and talk to other YPs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Part 2</b></p> <p>The YPs in the group highlighted youth spaces, education and community services as the three key areas in which the Faith Alliance and partners could prioritise in order to reduce and prevent serious youth violence.</p> <p>It appears in these choices that the YPs see direct services with YPs as necessary to tackling youth issues. The narrative of violence and the link to other social issues and the vulnerable in society continued into this section of the discussion.</p> <p>There was also a common theme around communication. YPs highlighted the need for more frank conversation around youth violence from faith leaders and faith groups with YPs. They also highlighted the need for more frequent communication and communication outlets for young people e.g. counselling.</p> <p><b>Part 3</b></p> <p>A common theme that came out of this question was that the consideration of the role of young people for the YPs was directly linked to how well they felt they were listened to and voices valued by their faith community.</p> <p>For those that felt their opinions were not valued, they were more hesitant in defining a role for young people. Unanimously YPs felt their role in Faith Alliance work was in their collective “fresh perspective” on strategies to tackle serious youth violence.</p>

Stage	Activity	Purpose	Results	Analysis
Research	Youth Voice workshop  2nd November 2023	To gather young people from different faiths and ask what the Faith Alliance should prioritise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some faith groups, faith leaders don't ask for voices of YPs so don't feel listened to, in other faith groups YPs are consulted, but YPs unsure if this is actually affecting/contributing to anything</li> <li>• One YP highlighted that because she was “young and female” her opinion doesn't feel valued</li> <li>• Easier to talk to other YP's or approach members in faith communities, faith leaders less approachable for YPs</li> </ul> <p><b>How should young people be involved in the Faith Alliance going forward?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth voice, YPs want to contribute to ideas/plans and give their opinion on Faith Alliance work</li> </ul> <p><b>How should young people be involved in their places of worship/faith communities going forward?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More youth spaces, more effort from faith groups to involve YPs</li> </ul>	This question resulted in a split of opinion based on previous experience of YPs in their voice being heard in faith spaces. And so, another common theme that was explored in this question were the characteristics behind these experiences. Several YPs highlighted the issues that older, more senior faith leaders were less approachable to talk to. YPs had a perception faith leaders would not be able to relate to YPs issues. They found young faith leaders and youth faith spaces as more approachable.
Prioritisation	Network Gathering  31st October	To review and provide feedback on a draft strategy	30 participants joined the online call. Participants asked for various small additions to the Strategy.	There were no major objections to the strategy, only ways to improve it.
Editing	Steering Group meeting  7th November	To gather feedback and agree final changes	Eight participants joined the online call. There was overall support for the draft strategy. Participants asked for various small additions to the Strategy.	There were no major objections to the strategy, only ways to improve it.
Dissemination	Launch  14th November 2023	To launch and promote the Faith Alliance strategy		







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West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership  
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## Declaration of Hope

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.

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**#BelieveInHope**

