

9. WAYS FORWARD

Checklist of next steps

This last chapter is a checklist of the recommendations made in chapters 3-8. In each instance there is cross-reference to the paragraph where a recommendation is first introduced and explained.

VISION (chapter 3)

1. *Shared values*

A national conversation should be launched across the UK by leaders of faith communities and ethical traditions to create a shared understanding of the fundamental values underlying public life. It would take place at all levels and in all regions. The outcome might well be – in the tradition of Magna Carta and other such declarations of rights over the centuries – a statement of the principles and values which foster the common good, and should underpin and guide public life. (*Paragraphs 3.13–3.14 and 3.30*)

2. *Religion and belief literacy*

There is a widespread need for greater religion and belief literacy. Relevant educational and professional bodies should draw up syllabuses, courses, programmes and modules. (*Paragraphs 3.16–3.23 and 3.31*)

3. *House of Lords*

The pluralist character of modern society should be reflected in national forums such as the House of Lords, so that they include a wider range of worldviews and religious traditions, and of Christian denominations other than the Church of England, as recommended by the Royal Commission on the Reform of the House of Lords. (*Paragraphs 3.24 and 3.34*)

4. *Ceremonies*

All those responsible for national and civic events, whether in the public sphere or in church, including the Coronation, should ensure that the pluralist character of modern society is reflected. (*Paragraphs 3.25–3.26 and 3.32*)

5. *Chaplaincy*

Funding for chaplaincies in hospitals, prisons and higher education should be protected with equitable representation for those from non-Christian religious traditions and for those from humanist traditions. (*Paragraphs 3.27 and 3.33*)

EDUCATION (chapter 4)

6. *Statutory entitlement*

Governments across the UK should introduce a statutory entitlement for all schools within the state system for a subject dealing with religious and non-religious worldviews. They should establish content and learning objectives that can be flexibly applied by teachers, allowing the minimum requirements to be built on differently by different schools. The content should be broad and inclusive in a way that reflects the diversity of religion and belief in the UK, and the subject should have the same status as other humanities subjects. (Paragraphs 4.22–4.24 and 4.27)

7. *Collective worship*

Governments should repeal requirements for schools to hold acts of collective worship or religious observance and issue new guidelines building on current best practice for inclusive assemblies and times for reflection that draw upon a range of sources, that are appropriate for pupils and staff of all religions and beliefs, and that will contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. (Paragraphs 4.17 and 4.28)

8. *Admissions and employment*

Responsible bodies should recognise the negative practical consequences of selection by religion in schools, and that most religious schools can further their aims without selecting on grounds of religion in their admissions and employment practices, and should take measures to reduce such selection. (Paragraphs 4.10–4.12 and 4.28)

9. *Outside the timetable*

Governments should expect publicly funded schools to be open for the provision of religion- or belief-specific teaching and worship on the school premises outside of the timetable for those who request it and wish to participate; this would be in line with the autonomy of young people and their human right to freedom of religion or belief. (Paragraph 4.28)

10. *Inspection*

State inspectorates should be concerned with every aspect of the life of faith schools, including religious elements currently inspected by denominational authorities. (Paragraph 4.28)

11. *Training*

In all teacher education attention should be given to religion and belief that is of a similar level to that which is given to reading and maths, so that every primary class teacher is confident and competent in this curriculum area, whether implicit or explicit, and so that in secondary and FE teaching all staff have general awareness of relevant sensitivities. (Paragraphs 4.16 and 4.28)

12. *Dialogue and enquiry*

Governments should clarify and emphasise that in all phases and sectors of the education system respectful and thoughtful discussion of contrasting opinions and worldviews is essential, and that all staff have skills in the educative handling of sensitive and controversial issues. (Paragraphs 4.25–26 and 4.28)

13. Continuing professional development

In the light of the public sector equality duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) the Equality and Human Rights Commission, or a similar body, should produce best practice guidelines on matters of religion and belief in the initial training and continuing professional development of staff employed in higher education; and in professions such as law, medicine, nursing and social work; and in government and public administration. (Paragraph 4.29)

MEDIA (chapter 5)**14. Religion and belief literacy**

Serious and ongoing attempts should be made to increase religion and belief literacy among all journalists and reporters. Possible ways of achieving this include: every newsroom retaining at least one religion and belief specialist, or subscribing to one specialist agency; a core element in all media training courses to include world religions and the implications of the changing religious landscape; the possibility of short placements in religion media outlets and organised exchanges of journalists in religious media with those in other outlets; a national commitment to funding such projects by relevant civil society bodies. (Paragraph 5.27)

15. Advisory panel

Consideration should be given to establishing a panel of experts on religion and belief for the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to use when there are complaints about the media. This may strengthen self-regulation of the media and help reassure the public about the quality of reporting on religion and belief. The panel would also be responsible for publishing an annual index of religion and belief literacy which would identify media outlets with best practice as well as those who need to improve the quality of their reporting on religion and belief. (Paragraph 5.29)

16. Awards scheme

It would be relevant and valuable to establish a prize (along the lines of existing prizes for religious broadcasting and for issues like mental health) which would recognise and reward the best in religion and belief coverage in the print and social media. (Paragraph 5.30)

17. Media literacy

Antagonism between religion and belief and media representatives should be reduced by developing relationships and understanding, not simply so that complaints can be aired. (Paragraph 5.31)

18. BBC

The coverage of religion should continue to be mandated in the BBC 2016 charter and it should take into account the UK's changing religious landscape. There should be a reference in the charter to the exploration of ethical dilemmas and the need for the public to come together at times of national grief or celebration. (Paragraph 5.32)

19. Thought for the Day

Slots in Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* should be extended to include contributions from those who will speak from a non-religious perspective, including humanists. (Paragraph 5.33)

20. Commercial channels and stations

Major commercial channels and stations should examine their policies on the coverage of religious topics to ensure that the place of religion and belief in society is adequately represented. (Paragraph 5.34)

DIALOGUE (chapter 6)**21. Encounter and dialogue**

It should be a high priority, not only for interfaith organisations but also for all religion and belief groups, educational institutions, public bodies and voluntary organisations, to promote opportunities for encounter and dialogue. (Paragraph 6.35)

22. Leadership training

Leaders of religion and belief groups should, with appropriate training, have good knowledge of the different traditions and communities within the UK, and should encourage their members to participate in dialogue and to help develop and maintain good relations within society. (Paragraph 6.35)

23. Open days and events

Faith communities should consider opening their places of worship at regular intervals to welcome and engage with those from other groups within their locality, and should explore the possibilities of twinning arrangements with other communities. (Paragraph 6.35)

24. Involvement

There should be more bilateral dialogue between Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions and between those who are religious and those who are not; more encounter and dialogue among young people should be promoted; and more women should become involved in interfaith structures. (Paragraph 6.35)

25. Funding

Major trusts and corporate responsibility programmes should consider supporting projects at both local and national levels to develop interreligious understanding, and/or to bring religion and belief groups together to work on social projects. (Paragraph 6.36)

26. Role of government

Government funding for interreligious dialogue should continue and the criteria for government grants should ensure that they serve to underpin the aspirations of the recipient bodies themselves, which should also be given help in identifying alternative sources of funding in readiness for when grants expire. (Paragraphs 6.21–6.22 and 6.36)

ACTION (chapter 7)

27. *Balance between service provision and advocacy*

Those engaged in social action need to consider the balance they wish to strike between providing services and campaigning for social justice. The energy consumed in meeting immediate needs should not be such that systemic injustices remain unchallenged. *(Paragraph 7.22 and 7.31)*

28. *Proactive planning*

Organisations rooted in a particular religion or belief should become more proactive in identifying areas of social need where they can engage in common action across deep difference, and funding bodies should encourage social action which achieves this goal wherever it is possible. *(Paragraph 7.24 and 7.31)*

29. *Lobbying*

National government should review the provisions of the Lobbying Act, to ensure that charities working for social justice are not prevented from campaigning as well as meeting needs. *(Paragraphs 7.22 and 7.31)*

30. *Dharmic traditions*

Training is particularly needed that enables organisations to engage more effectively with non-Abrahamic faith and belief groups, rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all model of religious engagement in social action. *(Paragraph 7.30 and 7.31)*

31. *Sharing motivation and seeking converts*

More generally, local and national government should work together with religion and belief groups to reach a common understanding of the distinction between appropriate ways of sharing the motivations for faith-based social action and inappropriate seeking of converts, and at the same time of the importance of recognising the spiritual needs of vulnerable people. *(Paragraph 7.21 and 7.31)*

32. *Fair funding*

Charitable trusts and CSR (corporate social responsibility) bodies should work with faith-based charities positioned to address particular social issues. If a religion- or belief-based organisation is best placed to deliver a social good, then it should not be disadvantaged in applying for funding to do so, assuming its services are not exclusive or aimed at seeking converts. *(Paragraphs 7.19–7.21 and 7.31)*

LAW (chapter 8)

33. *The balancing of rights*

An appropriate body, for example the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), should consider publishing guidance to encourage dialogue, mediation and dispute resolution where the manifestation of religion or belief in public life impacts or conflicts with the freedoms and rights of others. *(Paragraphs 8.7–8.11 and paragraph 8.26)*

34. *Minority religious tribunals and courts – (a) policy research*

Further academic research is required to identify which communities, other than Christians, Jews and Muslims, have religion-based law or tribunals. More needs to be known about the experience and impact of tribunal decisions on women users, and about the impact of state policies on the procedures and substantive rules of these tribunals. Future policy research could focus on identifying areas where the tribunals might work to support the civil law while protecting religious identity. (*Paragraphs 8.12–8.17 and 8.27*)

35. *Minority religious tribunals and courts – (b) best practice*

The Ministry of Justice should examine issues arising from formal and informal religious tribunals with a view to disseminating best practice – particularly with regards to good practice structures and processes and the promotion of gender equality; determining whether marriages between members of minority religious groups should be required, first or simultaneously, to be registered according to English law; determining whether all religious tribunals addressing civil disputes should be required to have structures and processes compatible with arbitration legislation. (*Paragraphs 8.12–8.17 and 8.28*)

36. *The concept of ethnicity*

An appropriate body, for example the Equality and Human Rights Commission or the Law Commission, should review how the categories of race, ethnicity and religion interact in practice and whether there are certain unjust anomalies which must be recognised and addressed, so that the law is more relevant, meaningful and fair in the light of more recent experience. (*Paragraphs 8.18–8.21 and 8.29–8.31*)

37. *Counter-terrorism legislation*

In framing counter-terrorism legislation, the government should seek to promote, not limit, freedom of enquiry, speech and expression, and should engage with a wide range of affected groups, including those with which it disagrees, and also with academic research. It should lead public opinion by challenging negative stereotyping and by speaking out in support of groups that may otherwise feel vulnerable and excluded. (*Paragraphs 8.22–8.25 and 8.32*)