

Even if your organisation is registered with your Local Authority under the Places of Worship Act, you will still need to register with the Commission.

In law, the term charity is defined more narrowly than its use in ordinary practice would suggest. For that reason, we may be able to help organisations to state their objects so as to ensure they are exclusively charitable.

There are many benefits to registration. The public, and in particular funders, are more likely to donate to registered charities because they know that they come under the Commission's regulatory framework.

Charities benefit from substantial tax breaks. They do not normally have to pay:

- income tax;
- corporation tax;
- capital gains tax;
- inheritance tax;
- stamp duty.

Charities qualify for business rates and an 80% reduction in council tax. People who donate to charities can do so in a way that increases the value of their gift under the Gift Aid scheme, at no extra cost to the donor.



DAME SUZI LEATHER, CHAIR

Registered charities also have access to free expert advice and tailored guidance from the Commission.

Organisations that are already registered:

We can help explain what your statutory requirements are and help you meet them, offering local workshops and guidance for your trustees.

We can provide networking and signposting opportunities and facilitate the sharing of good practice between organisations. We also want to highlight beacons of excellent governance.

We want to help your organisation achieve its aims, fulfil its potential and facilitate social cohesion. This can be done through good governance and engaging with civil society.

Getting in touch

We want to work with you. If you want advice, guidance on registration, are interested in workshops in your local area, or just want more information, contact us at:

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Charity Commission
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An introduction to the Faith and Social Cohesion Unit (FSCU)

Dedicated to supporting faith-based charities



The Charity Commission

Being a charity is not a matter of opinion or preference, but a matter of law.

The Charity Commission is established by law as the independent regulator and registrar for charities in England and Wales.

Our aim is to provide the best possible regulation and support to charities in order to increase their effectiveness and increase the public's trust and confidence in them.

Engaging with faith-based charities

Faith-based charities play a crucial role in our communities and have a valuable role to play in building social capital. They provide vital services such as places of worship, education, support and aid, both in this country and overseas.

For some years, the Charity Commission has been looking to deepen its understanding of faith-based charities and the context in which they work, so that we can improve the way we work with these charities.

In 2003 we began a project with independent Evangelical Christian churches. This led to the production of jointly designed model governing documents and improved standards of governance and accountability.

Building on the success of this work, the Commission's work with faith groups grew into a two year programme of workshops with over 800 representatives from organisations across 11 different faiths. The consistent messages raised by the representatives of faith-based charities were the desire for:

- (a) tailored support and understanding from a regulator that appreciates their needs; and
- (b) help in raising standards of governance and accountability.

Establishing the Faith and Social Cohesion Unit (FSCU)

As a result, the Commission has established the Faith and Social Cohesion Unit (FSCU).



FSCU LAUNCH EVENT, BIRMINGHAM, MARCH 2008

The current phase of the Commission's faith work, and the first of the FSCU's projects, is working specifically with the largest minority faith community in the UK - the Muslim community. A clear message that came through during our consultations was that Muslim groups were in particular need of support. Islam is now the UK's second largest religion and the fastest growing single faith group in the country. We also know that Muslim charities are currently under-represented on the Register of Charities.

This phase will run from November 2007 – October 2009 and will focus primarily on Greater London, the Midlands, Yorkshire and Lancashire. A Project Board has been established to support this work with Muslim charities.

This includes representatives from the newly established Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB). MINAB is comprised of representatives from the Muslim Council of Britain, the British Muslim Forum, the Muslim Association of Britain and the Al-Khoei Foundation.

The aims of the Faith and Social Cohesion Unit

The Faith and Social Cohesion Unit is a dedicated team who will work with and support the faith-based sector by:

- Promoting the valuable contribution it makes to society.
- Enhancing and promoting high standards of governance and accountability.

- Supporting a balanced environment where cultural understanding and community cohesion can flourish.

We want to encourage faith organisations to register and enjoy the benefits of registration. We also want to support those already registered by offering them guidance and advice to promote high standards of governance and accountability.

The Commission is committed to the continuing development of its wider work with faith-based charities. We plan to share the lessons learnt and products developed by the FSCU with all faith charities. As part of this, the Commission is establishing a wider faiths advisory group.

The Commission works with organisations of many different faiths. If your organisation has any general questions concerning the work of the Charity Commission and its advisory and regulatory powers for charities you can contact Charity Commission Direct on **0845 300 0218** or email by following the links on our website, www.charitycommission.gov.uk

FSCU Outreach Team: What we can do for you

The outreach team is undertaking a range of projects. We are identifying and surveying Mosques across the regions. We are contacting grass roots and umbrella organisations to raise awareness of the benefits of registration and their legal requirements.

We are then engaging with organisations to enable registration and promote good governance. We are developing a webpage, newsletter and other tools to help us achieve our aims.

Organisations that are not yet registered:

Most organisations that fit the following criteria are legally required to register:

- have an annual income of over £5,000;
- set up for charitable purposes; and
- subject to English and Welsh Law.