

Interfaith Social Action in the United Kingdom

A Comprehensive Guide & Planning Toolkit

1. Overview of Interfaith Social Action in the UK

Interfaith social action in the United Kingdom refers to collaborative efforts in which people of diverse religious faiths, beliefs, and non-religious backgrounds come together to address shared social, economic, and environmental issues in their local communities. Rather than focusing primarily on theological dialogue, interfaith social action puts shared values, such as compassion, justice, and service, into practice through hands-on initiatives including food banks, homeless shelters, environmental conservation projects, and youth mentoring schemes.

Driven by local faith groups, national charities like *Near Neighbours*, and community networks, these joint projects serve a dual purpose: providing vital practical support to vulnerable populations while simultaneously fostering social cohesion, breaking down religious prejudices, and building lasting trust across culturally diverse British neighbourhoods.

2. What is Mitzvah Day?

Mitzvah Day is the United Kingdom's largest faith-led day of social action. Rooted in Jewish values, the word *mitzvah* comes from Hebrew for commandment and has come to mean a good deed or act of kindness. Mitzvah Day brings together thousands of people of all faiths, beliefs, and backgrounds to volunteer side by side, giving time rather than money to make a hands-on, tangible difference in local communities. By working together on practical charitable projects, volunteers build genuine, longstanding relationships and strengthen local social cohesion. In 2026, **Mitzvah Day will take place on Sunday 22 November 2026.**

3. Hosting a Successful Project: Best Practices from Mitzvah Day

Drawing on Mitzvah Day's resources, hosting a successful interfaith social action project relies on structured preparation, respectful engagement, and hands-on collaboration. Organisers can follow key best practices derived from Mitzvah Day's official project guides and resources to plan and execute an impactful initiative:

Step-by-Step Hosting Principles

- **Reach Out and Build Face-to-Face Relationships:** Contact local places of worship, schools, or faith organisations early. Hold an in-person or face-to-face planning meeting at a local venue to establish trust and pitch the idea. Select a project focus, such as collecting for local food banks, cooking meals for night shelters, environmental cleanups, or packing stationery for refugees, that aligns with shared values.
- **Practice Sensitivity and Inclusivity:** Account for differing dietary requirements (such as Kosher, Halal, or vegetarian options) if providing food. Schedule activities around traditional prayer times (for example, avoiding Friday afternoons, Saturdays, or Sunday mornings depending on the partners involved). Be mindful of modesty codes, personal space preferences regarding physical contact between genders, and obtain clear consent before taking photos. Keep the focus centred strictly on hands-on giving and shared community values.
- **Focus on Practical Hands-On Action:** Choose hands-on, high-impact activities where volunteers work side by side, such as tree planting, upcycling, or running a collection drive, so participants experience a tangible sense of shared achievement. Register the project with national frameworks like Mitzvah Day to access resource packs, t-shirts, stickers, and planning toolkits.
- **Manage Safeguarding and Logistics:** Ensure the host facility or partner organisation's public liability insurance covers the event and confirm whether Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are required if working directly with vulnerable groups or children. Promote open communication and an environment of mutual goodwill.

4. Comprehensive Step-by-Step Planning Checklist

Hosting a successful interfaith social action project requires thoughtful planning, respectful communication, and clear logistics. Use this step-by-step checklist to guide your planning from initial concept through post-event relationship building.

Planning Phase	Action Items
Phase 1: Initial Vision and Partnership (6 to 8 Weeks Before)	• Identify Co-Organisers: Connect with leaders or representatives from at least two different faith or belief communities to form a joint planning committee. • Select a Shared Cause: Agree on a hands-on project that reflects common values, such as a food collection drive, park clean-up, cooking for a local shelter, or building community garden beds. • Define Roles and Responsibilities: Assign specific leads for event management, volunteer outreach, faith and dietary sensitivity, and communications. • Set the Date and Time: Cross-check religious calendars, weekly holy days, and prayer times to ensure the selected date and time are accessible for all participating communities.
Phase 2: Logistics and Sensitivity (4 to 6 Weeks Before)	• Secure a Neutral or Accessible Venue: Book a space that is welcoming to all groups (for example, a community centre, local park, or a faith venue that all partners agree upon). • Plan Dietary Accommodations: If providing food or refreshments, ensure clear options that satisfy dietary requirements (such as Kosher, Halal, vegetarian, or vegan) and label all ingredients clearly. • Review Religious Protocols: Confirm modesty considerations, venue entry rules (such as shoe removal or head coverings), and schedule short breaks if the event overlaps with prayer times. • Check Safeguarding and Insurance: Confirm public liability insurance coverage with the venue or co-hosting organisation, and check if Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are required for activities involving children or vulnerable adults.
Phase 3: Promotion and Registration (2 to 4 Weeks Before)	• Register with National Networks: If participating in national initiatives like <i>Mitzvah Day</i> or <i>Inter Faith Week</i>, register your project to access official toolkits, promotional templates, and materials. • Distribute Invitations: Share joint flyers, bulletin announcements, and social media graphics across all partner congregations, schools, and local networks. • Collect Volunteer Details: Set up an online registration form to track attendee numbers, emergency contacts, accessibility requirements, and dietary preferences. • Gather Materials and Supplies: Purchase or request donations for all required project tools (for example, gardening gloves, packing

Planning Phase	Action Items
	boxes, cleaning tools, non-perishable food drive bins).
Phase 4: Final Preparations <i>(1 Week Before)</i>	• Conduct a Venue Walk-Through: Confirm room layouts, check accessibility features, inspect handwashing and sanitation facilities, and verify quiet or prayer space availability. • Prepare Welcome and Briefing Materials: Draft a brief opening script highlighting the shared community goals and setting a warm, inclusive tone. • Finalise Safety Logistics: Print attendance sign-in sheets, set up a designated first aid station, and prepare photo consent forms or colour-coded lanyards for participants who prefer not to be photographed. • Reconfirm Partner Faith Leaders: Send a quick reminder email with directions, parking instructions, and arrival times to all key partner representatives.
Phase 5: Event Day Execution	• Set Up Early: Arrive at least 60 to 90 minutes prior to start time to set up registration tables, signage, materials, and refreshment areas. • Deliver Opening Briefing: Welcome participants, explain safety protocols, outline the day's goals, and set ground rules emphasizing hands-on action and mutual respect. • Pair Up Volunteers: Mix participants from different faith backgrounds in working groups to encourage natural dialogue and relationship-building while completing tasks. • Capture the Impact: Photograph activities (with proper consent), log key statistics (for example, kilograms of food collected, trees planted, care packages assembled), and enjoy the collaborative effort.
Phase 6: Post-Event Engagement <i>(1 to 2 Weeks After)</i>	• Send Thank-You Notes: Thank all volunteers, partner organisations, venue staff, and local sponsors with a summary of the project's accomplishments. • Gather Feedback: Hold a short debrief meeting with your co-planning committee to review what went well and identify areas for future improvement. • Share Your Results: Publish a photo summary and impact metrics on social media, local press outlets, and internal congregational newsletters. • Plan the Next Step: Schedule a follow-up informal gathering (such as a shared meal or coffee morning) to keep the interfaith network active and discuss future joint initiatives.