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## **[Faith in Football](#)**

27/06/11 09:18



Monday, 27 June, 2011

### **Working group set up to help tackle anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.**



On the 22 June, The FA held the inaugural meeting of the Faith In Football Working Group at Wembley Stadium.

The group, chaired by Alex Goldberg from the Faiths Forum for London and the European Center for Jewish Leadership, met to agree a set of principles by which the group would work together; and use the power of football to break down barriers between people of different religious denominations.

The meeting was attended by Alison Vaughan (Kick it Out), Butch Fazal (Luton SFC and FA REAG Member), Majid Lavji and Lee Owen (Asia Europe), Sukhvinder Cheema, Rimla Akhter (Muslim Women Sports Foundation and FA REAG member), Rabbi Zevi Sanders (Southport Hebrew Congregation and Manager Crumpsall FC), Aisling Cohn (Three Faith Forums) and Abdal Ahmed (Osmani Trust) and a representative of the Metropolitan Police Safe Neighbourhood Teams.

Over the next 12 months, the group will be setting up a number of tournaments and competitions across the country at high profile stadiums and raising good practice around Faith In Football as part of The FAs Get Into Football campaign. The group will also work closely with Kick it Out as part of the Kick it Out Weeks of Action campaign as well as holding education sessions at Wembley stadium.

Alex Goldberg said: "It's remarkable that we have a consensus within this group that football can promote social action and break down barriers between people of different faiths. Collectively we have a responsibility to tackling faith based discrimination in the game, particularly Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and a need to bridge the gap between football and religious communities where football has not been played in a structured way. Clearly, The FA is moving in the right direction in addressing these issues and moving this important agenda

forward.”

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Butch Fazal of Luton SFC, added: "It's a piece of work that is critically important and by raising awareness through this group and educating others, we can begin to challenge Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism."

Alison Vaughan, Campaign Manager for Kick it Out, said: "It is really important that we recognise good practice in this area of work, and through our Weeks of Action programmes, we can encourage education and raise awareness around this topic in schools and pull together regional seminars to debate and discuss the topic further."

Rimla Akhter of the Muslim Women's Sports Foundation commented: "It is equally important to educate the adults and parents as well as young people."

Finally, The FA's Equality Co-ordinator Jonathan Mills said: "Over the past couple of years, The FA has been working closely with John Mann MP on a whole football approach to tackling Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. This working group is certainly a step in the right direction in promoting unity between people of different faiths."

The group will meet again in September in the West Midlands, if you would like to get involved please contact Alex Goldberg [alexander@jdceurope.org](mailto:alexander@jdceurope.org) or Jonathan Mills [jonathan.mills@thefa.com](mailto:jonathan.mills@thefa.com)

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