

# Government registration and inspection of church youth work

April 2016

## Joint statement and call to action



Christian  
Concern



Requiring churches in England to register before they are legally allowed to help children learn the Christian values our nation was built on is an unjustified restriction of religious liberty. Whether the threshold is 6 hours in any week or higher, the principle of outlawing 'unregistered churches' from teaching children the gospel is an unacceptable overreach of the state.

The Government says Ofsted will only inspect churches for 'British values' compliance if there is a complaint. However, the scope for vexatious complaints is considerable, especially in the current climate of aggressive secularism and religious illiteracy. The experience of some Christian schools is that inspectors themselves can be ignorant of or hostile to Christian beliefs and practices.

We do not believe Ofsted should become the state regulator of religion. For an inspector to scrutinise a Sunday School class, Bible study, youth meeting or church weekend away would be highly intrusive. The prospect of inspectors questioning volunteer leaders and children (without their parents) is an unwarranted incursion into private religion and family life.

Christians are peace-loving, law-abiding citizens who respect authority and love their neighbours. They are a major source of volunteering, and represent the best of 'British values'. To require such people to submit to registration and inspection to ensure they are not encouraging terrorism is profoundly misconceived.

Whilst Christians wholeheartedly support reasonable measures to prevent terrorism and violent extremism, these proposals will lead to a loss of civil liberties and create a large bureaucracy that will divert resources away from restraining extremists who reject UK law. Such individuals will simply ignore or effortlessly circumvent the registration requirements. We urge the Government to drop these proposals and develop a targeted, intelligence-led approach that will genuinely inhibit the activities of violent extremists.

**We call on Christians, churches and affected organisations in England to contact their MPs and urge them to oppose these plans.**

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