



Inter Faith Network day event for local inter faith practitioners

A SHORT REPORT

Wednesday 22 March 2017

City Hall, Bristol



About the day



Jatinder Singh Birdi, IFN Co-Chair and Warwick District Faiths Forum, and Dr Abdalla Yassin Mohamed OBE, Newport Inter Faith Group

On 22 March 2017 practitioners from a wide range of local inter faith groups from different parts of the UK came together in Bristol for a day of learning and sharing held by the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN).

The first local inter faith groups began to emerge in the UK back in the 1970s. From a handful of pioneering groups, local inter faith bodies have mushroomed in number to over 250 and there are also many types of local initiative which are not 'inter faith organisations' as such, including bodies such as SACREs and local multi faith chaplaincies as well as projects, initiatives and short term programmes. What are some of the features of the landscape today

and some of the challenges and possibilities in working locally for inter faith understanding and cooperation?

IFN has, since it was established in 1987, advocated strongly for the importance of local inter faith activity. This has been a part of its overall pattern of work. Local activity is organically related to the very important work of national faith community bodies and also benefits from the work of national and regional inter faith and educational initiatives of many kinds. Past IFN National Meetings have explored these links and the importance of the role of national faith communities and inter faith initiatives in supporting and encouraging local inter faith activity.



This day event was offered specifically for local inter faith practitioners to share their experiences, and to discuss issues of common interest and concern and for focused learning opportunities drawing on the kinds of questions and issues raised by IFN member local groups at link meetings in the last two years. It was open to all local inter faith groups in the UK and also local inter faith practitioners with a particular interest in the issues working in other contexts.

The event began with a period of silence to remember in thanks all those in the UK and around the world working for greater inter faith understanding and cooperation.

The event was facilitated by Dr Harriet Crabtree who noted in her opening remarks that supporting local inter faith organisations was an important part of the work of IFN and it was a privilege to take part in the day and hear about the work taking place locally throughout the UK. The

day was open to both member bodies and non-member groups as IFN supported both. She welcomed participants on behalf of IFN.

Participants were then given a welcome to Bristol by Mr Bernard Omar on behalf of Bristol Inter Faith Group, a founder member body of IFN, and Bristol Multi Faith Forum. He commented on the importance of local inter faith organisations to IFN's work and to its ability to engage with Government over inter faith issues.

Morning session

Local inter faith organisations: a vital resource in our communities

Mr Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chair,
Inter Faith Network for the UK

Mr Birdi made the following points

- There are around 250 local inter faith organisations in the UK. Some of these are up to 40 years old, others are developing right now.
- Some local groups are formal, some are informal. All are aiming to meet the needs of local communities and their activities vary according to what works in each area.
- Local inter faith organisations are often the first to respond in times of need.
- Local inter faith organisations are very important and supporting them is a vital part of IFN's work.
- It is interesting, especially in a period of such rapid change, to be able learn from one another through events such as this one.
- Local inter faith organisations often don't praise themselves enough. Such events are a good platform to demonstrate the excellent work taking place, especially as positive stories often don't make the news.
- He is the Chair of Warwick District Faiths Forum (WDFF).
- When WDFF came into existence 11 years ago he was aware that there were two inter faith groups that had been started in the area but had over time ceased to exist. It was important to find out why that had happened. They began with a mapping exercise and concluded that they needed to involve the statutory, voluntary and community sectors as well. Faith groups cannot action everything, sometimes other bodies are needed. In this way faith communities are able to pass concerns to statutory and other bodies and they are able to engage with faith communities. Building up a hub of trust is important and takes time.
- One of WDFF's first activities was to create a multi faith calendar. This is still done every year.
- WDFF also set up a faith trail for people to see places of worship. This is because it's often easier to visit if there is an open day rather than just going in by yourself.
- Each year in Leamington there is a Peace Festival and individual faith groups have stalls about their work. WDFF decided to have a multi faith stall with a display on a different theme each year, for example health or the environment. Each faith community creates an A1 sheet of card with their views on it. This helps to break down barriers as it shows how much communities have in common.
- WDFF holds conferences on themes such as 'Faith, family and friendship', 'Faith and the environment', 'Faith and human rights'. It is important to tackle these issues affecting local communities. Speakers have included the Chief Crown Prosecutor for the West Midlands, the

Chief Constable of Warwickshire Police and the Director of Public Health Warwickshire. There have also been speakers on domestic abuse. This is very difficult to talk about in faith communities so it is good to have a speaker as a way to address a difficult issue. Faith communities have to address difficult issues.

- Each local inter faith group is different. What happens in WDFF may not be suitable for other areas but it is good to learn from each other. IFN's events are very important for this.
- It is important to keep the enthusiasm going and to encourage people to come to local inter faith group events.
- Groups should not shy away from discussing difficult issues. There is a need to be open.
- It is important to find out what local communities need.
- Bodies, such as health organisations, emergency services and so forth often ask a WDFF representative to attend their meetings.
- Last year during National Dementia Week he and a Polish colleague had gone into Warwick Hospital with leaflets in Polish and Punjabi talking about dementia. It is good to be proactive.

The following questions were asked. Mr Birdi's responses are in italics.

- What led WDFF to create a calendar and what are the challenges involved?

WDFF thought it was a good way to raise awareness of faith festivals. These dates are all on the internet, of course, but people are much more likely to look at a calendar on their desk. The photos on it help to encourage interest and it is an ice

breaker. Statutory bodies have put money towards it because they see it as benefit.

- How are the calendars distributed?

They are distributed to faith communities and to statutory agencies and to anyone who asks for them.

- Is the calendar part of a wider communications strategy?

Yes. WDFF has a website and all the calendars are on that as well.

- Can our local inter faith group buy the WDFF calendar or should we try to produce our own on limited funding?

The WDFF calendar has usually got local pictures in it (and although one year they were all international places of worship) and local festivals so it may not be appropriate for other areas. They only cost about £1 each to produce and WDFF does not charge for them. Sometimes students and others can volunteer to help in creating them, for example with taking photos.

- Does WDFF carry out social action projects?

WDFF does carry out social action projects directly. It has tackled some of these issues through conferences. WDFF supports faith communities in Warwick in their social action work and publicises this.

Working to increase religious literacy and counter prejudice I

The Revd Canon Dr John Hall, Devon Faith and Belief Group and Trustee, Inter Faith Network for the UK, Cllr Chaz Singh, Plymouth Council of Faiths and the Turban Project and Ravindra Nathwani, Exeter Interfaith and Belief Group schools programme

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used for this presentation are included at the end of this section.

Dr Hall said that Devon is a very large county and this can make it hard to keep a sense of togetherness and for people to visit other cities [Slide 2]. The Devon Faith and Belief Forum works with Exeter Interfaith and Belief Group, Plymouth

Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, the Plymouth Council of Faiths and Torbay Interfaith Forum. One of its projects is the Devon Interfaith Forum 4 Youth.

Cllr Singh offered the following points:

- He moved to Plymouth not long after the terrorist attack of 9/11.
- He served as the Deputy Lord Mayor of Plymouth with his wife Saranjit Kaur as the Deputy Lady Mayoress in 2012–13. They were the first Sikhs ever to take this role.
- He used to receive lots of negative comments from people, such as those suggesting that he should return to his own country. In response he decided to turn negative statements into positive images. In 2006 he posted a photo of himself dressed as St George. [Slide 3] He is now the sole organiser of St George's Day in Plymouth. He rides a horse



Ingrid Wilson, Newport Interfaith Group, and Tom Rutland, Somerset County Council

through the city centre for this and they raise money for charities. The image went all over world, including appearing on Far Right websites. It has led to death threats but also to congratulations. The image has now become quite positive.

Dr Hall continued:

- There are, however, sadly, still a lot of incidents of racist abuse. For example, the *Plymouth Herald* reported that two Muslim men had been racially abused outside a mosque but the perpetrators were not charged due to lack of evidence [Slide 4]; and in Plymouth a Councillor was arrested after giving a Nazi salute in the Council Chamber [Slide 5]. Jewish people were often on the receiving end of attacks also.
- Plymouth is taking in around 30 refugees per month.
- Plymouth Council of Faiths is moving towards being engaged with religious literacy, for example, Hindus and Pagans explaining their faith to others. [Slide 6]
- The Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity is moving location and redeveloping its work. Its schools work is outstanding. [Slide 7]
- Other incidents included a man called Nicky Reilly attempting to bomb the Giraffe Café in Exeter [Slide 8] and a Newton Abbot youngster being involved with terrorism. [Slide 9]
- The Devon Faith and Belief Forum meets at different venues, for example Exeter Synagogue. [Slide 10]
- Devon Faith and Belief Forum initiated a statue called The Universal Pilgrim which was unveiled in Exeter in September 2016. It is now a permanent presence and focus for peace. [Slide 11]



Cllr Chaz Singh, Plymouth Council of Faiths, demonstrates tying a turban on one of the other delegates present

- Devon Faith and Belief Forum has organised a schools focus conference for the last two years. [Slide 12]

Cllr Singh said that he works across the South West. He put in a bid for funding with the Church Urban Fund/Near Neighbours and the Diocese of Exeter and now Turban Awareness Day takes place each year on 29 April. The day enables people to explain who Sikhs are and their contribution to the UK, including, for example, their contribution to WWII. There are only 89 Sikhs in Plymouth, a city of 264,000 people.

Cllr Singh demonstrated tying a turban on one of the other delegates present. (See opposite)

He went on to add that in 2012 he and his wife had become Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress of Plymouth. One of the staff had asked if it would be a problem for them to go into other places of worship. It was not a problem to him and, in fact, it broke down barriers for him to walk into a place of worship. He said that one of the first times he had demonstrated tying a turban was in an Art College. The student volunteer wearing the turban said that once he was wearing the turban, he was, for the first time, stopped by security guards.

Dr Hall said that on the way to the present meeting he and colleagues had travelled together from Exeter – a Christian, a Hindu, a Sikh and a Muslim in a car. They had discussed how they felt about the Court of Justice decision in relation to what employers allow people to wear. This was an example of sharing issues and facing them together; learning and exploring and working together. There is a need to communicate this type of work to young people and schools work is a large part of this.

Mr Nathwani offered the following reflections:

- He was honoured to speak at the event.

- He was born in a Catholic Missionary hospital in Lwala in Uganda into a Hindu family who migrated from India to Africa. He was educated in a Muslim school and grew up with children from different faith backgrounds, who all mingled together and shared festivals, living in harmony.

- There is a Hindu saying that the world is one family (*Vasudevam Kutumbh Kum*).

- The first proponent of inter faith dialogue on a world stage was Swami Vivekanand at the first Parliament of the World Religions in 1893 in Chicago. It is ironic that his address was given on 11 September. His message was harmony and peace but events over the years show that the world has not listened. He prayed for a peaceful world.

- The membership of Exeter Interfaith and Belief Group includes Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Humanists, Muslims and more.

- The Exeter Interfaith and Belief Group was involved in setting up the Multi Faith Chaplaincy at the University of Exeter.

- The Group is small to encourage trust among members for deeper conversations. There are a small number of people from minority faiths in Exeter and they are much in demand by many organisations so it is hard for them to attend meetings regularly.

- The Group has a wide email membership, including local authority officials.

- Meetings often involve discussions and 'bring and share' food. They also hold peace vigils in response to world events and peace walks during Inter Faith Week. They held an open meeting with the Police to discuss the Prevent Strategy and participated in hospice training days about end of life care needed for people of different traditions.

- The group provides speakers to schools and holds workshops. For example, setting up a demonstration of a Hindu shrine and talking about inter faith dialogue. [Slide 13]
- The group has a multi faith stall each year at the Respect Festival. [Slide 15]
- In Inter Faith Week faith communities prayed together under one roof at an event organised on the theme of universal peace. They also produced a booklet for universal peace prayer.
- In Exeter people are coming to respect one other and to live in harmony.

The following questions/comments were raised. Responses are in italics.

- Are you working with the Devon SACRE?

DGBF has a good relationship with the Devon SACRE. DGBF offers faith leader training for speakers going into schools and works collaboratively with the SACRE to support that. The next programme for it is in April and May. Mr Nathwani is a member of Devon SACRE.

- Who does the training for speakers?

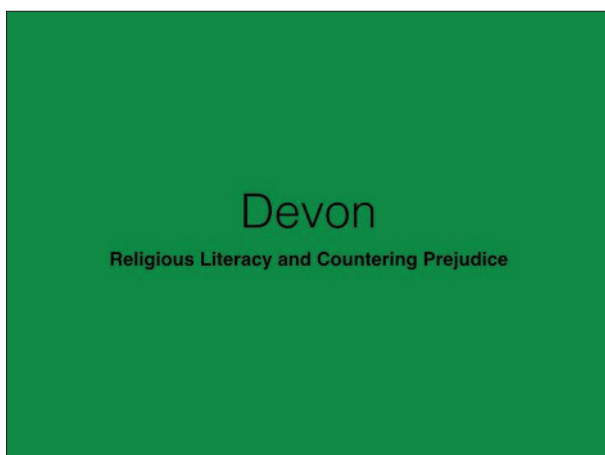
The training is open to teachers, governors and faith speakers. It is facilitated by a group including a retired Headteacher and the Diocese of Exeter Education Adviser.

- Religious literacy is not just about what faith groups believe but about what religion is about.

- How does the delegate feel who had a turban tied on his head by Mr Singh?

Very aware of having something on my head. Makes me think what it would be like to wear such an obvious statement of faith in everyday life. It is comfortable but might be hot to wear all day. I would not mind wearing it in my own place of worship as an example.

Dr Crabtree said that it was good to be reminded of the 1893 Parliament of the World Religions. When she had worked in the United States, a colleague at the University where she had studied and taught had researched the history of it. Only 125 years ago people in many countries had not come into contact with people from other faiths much. In the last 20 to 30 years in the UK inter faith encounters have accelerated and local inter faith organisations are very important in that context.





Two Royal Navy sailors in court over allegations of racist abuse

Tuesday November 8 2016

The *Plymouth Herald* reports on the court appearance of two Royal Navy sailors who are accused of racially abusing two men as they left an Islamic centre in Plymouth in the early hours on 12 June.



Plymouth man arrested by counter-terrorism unit over mosque bomb threat

By *David Hogg* 11:00pm August 19, 2016

A Plymouth man is being held by counter-terrorism officers...

Police say his arrest followed a hand-written bomb threat being sent to a mosque in Rotherham, South Yorkshire

Nazi salute Plymouth councillor Jonny Morris suspended

By *David Hogg* 11:00pm August 19, 2016

A city councillor who made a Nazi salute during a meeting has been suspended.

Plymouth Synagogue (1765)



The oldest Ashkenazi Synagogue in the English speaking world still in regular use

Since 2001 Plymouth has taken an average of 30 people month under the Asylum Seeker/ Refugee dispersal scheme

Plymouth Council of Faiths



What Others Say

"Thank you for your membership help and support in making the cultural day so successful we have had the most positive feedback so far." Secondary school teacher

"No resources for what when people moved all the really enjoyed it." Sophie, year 3 pupil

"Thank you for coming to our school we learned a lot more about Islam & Christianity, year 3 pupil

"This book for what when we did the role play of marriage. I liked the video and the source." Charlotte, year 6 student

"They thought the shared Greek wedding and the Turkish wedding were beautiful. I am sure that the visit will help them appreciate the importance of valuing people who follow different religions." Primary school teacher following a visit to the Synagogue.

"It is much better to hear about it from someone who has actually experienced it rather than reading about it in a book." Nicole, Year 9 student

"The facts and details which you gave made the lesson different to the way we normally work." Michael, Year 9 pupil

"No sight or picture of the Holocaust could have brought it home more than this meeting is a success." Andrew, year 11 student

Centre Staff

Director: Jonathan Marshall MBE

Principal: Jonathan Marshall MBE

Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity

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Nicky Reilly Bomb Giraffe Cafe Exeter



Newton Abbot 'terror raid teen' named locally as poker-mad 19-year-old

By *David Hogg* 11:00pm October 24, 2016

The teenage at the centre of a major counter-terror investigation that sparked a large operation in Newton Abbot over the weekend has been named locally as Damon Smith...

He was named as the suspect being questioned by police investigating a device found on a London Tube train last week...

London police arrived by helicopter on Sunday and local residents were evacuated from their homes to a nearby school. The helicopters landed on nearby fields, cancelling a local football match.

Devon Faith and Belief Forum at Exeter Synagogue





Universal Pilgrim Statue unveiling



Schools focus conference Exeter



Schools visit: Muslim, Hindu and Christian presentations on mercy

Introducing Ravi Nathan



Holi



Respect Festival Exeter



First public ever public Menorah Lighting in Exeter



Using Fiction to promote understanding: book launch March 2017

Working to increase religious literacy and counter prejudice II

Farzana Saker, West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum

Ms Saker offered the following points:

- West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum (WWMFF) was formed in response to community needs following unease after 9/11. It came about following a conversation between two neighbours.
 - Its activities are an important way to raise awareness of faith, culture and identity.
 - As part of many other activities WWMFF engages and raises awareness through Faith and Cultural Awareness Training. Its first client was Wiltshire Police which asked for faith and awareness training and this was still an ongoing piece of work.
 - WWMFF also visits schools and runs English classes for people from different ethnic groups.
 - It was easier to access secondary schools when WWMFF had funding and could provide a day of learning and fun. When the grant stopped, secondary schools stopped inviting them, but they continue to receive invitations from primary schools to hold collective assemblies on a theme. Usually people from 3 or 4 different faiths go into each school. One talks about faith in general followed by a talk on the theme. Children hear from at least three different faith speakers about the similarities between their moral values.
 - WWMFF has provided training for local NHS organisations and housing bodies and, recently, for Wiltshire Council
- community engagement managers. So much had been learned from the latter that a conference is now planned on overcoming barriers to effective engagement.
- There is not as much hate crime in the area as elsewhere in the country but those wearing religious symbols are visible targets.
 - The WWMFF is represented on the Crown Prosecution Service Hate Crime Security Panel, Wiltshire and Swindon Hate Crime Group multi-agency partnership, and was involved in initial dialogue with Wiltshire Police to start an Independent Advisory Group.
 - In addition WWMFF helps and support those needing to report incidents but lacking confidence due to, for example, language problems. Volunteers go into local shops to find out if people haven't reported abuse and then help them to report it or report it on their behalf.
 - WWMFF takes part in Wiltshire's Festival of Food which is very popular. Everything is affordable so it is very inclusive.
 - WWMFF engages and build relationships with other individual and community groups and so has a lot of involvement locally. This is vital.

Dr Crabtree said that increased numbers of people have been affected by hate crime particularly since the European Union Referendum outcome. IFN has been doing work on this area and updating relevant guidance. It is not just one community that is affected. Hate crime can be reported through the True Vision site (http://www.report-it.org.uk/report_a_hate_crime). Local groups can play an important role in encouraging people to report crimes.

Ms Saker added her support for the use of the True Vision website and talking to communities about reporting hate crime. It is good for local inter faith organisations to help those wanting to use report hate crime. Some find the form on the True Vision website is too long and difficult to complete, especially for those without English as first language. WWMFF has brought this to the attention of Wiltshire Police.

The following questions/comments were raised. Responses are in italics.

- How has contact with local shops and businesses been made?

Volunteers visit shops and businesses but WWMFF does not have enough volunteers. We inform groups through annual letters explaining our work, offering our services for free with a request for donations and expenses.

- Do you find some faith groups isolate themselves and think that they can deal with problems alone? It was sad that funding had ceased. Was it a case of only being given funding when there was a problem, as was often the position?

Funding is very difficult to get. There was an opportunity for funding about seven years ago, which enabled WWMFF to do free school visits.

- Does WWMFF have any interaction with the military complex in Wiltshire?

We are concentrated in Trowbridge, Melksham, Westbury and Devizes so some military personnel may have been present at events as events are open to all. Great care is always taken about the topics discussed. Usually the topics are on challenging injustices and promoting peace and encouraging creative thinking and ways to build a socially inclusive society.

Sharing of other groups' experiences of working for religious literacy and to tackle prejudice

Working in partnership with local authorities and others

The Revd Tracey Lewis, Chair, Bristol Multi Faith Forum with BMFF colleagues, Alastair Beattie and Duncan Struthers

The Revd Tracey Lewis offered the following points:

- Bristol Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) has grown as a network of faith communities. It enables those from faith communities to be involved in city life and offers Bristol City Council a point of reference with faith communities.
- BMFF has been a funded group for at least the last 10 years. A grant from Bristol City Council enabled the steering group to be set up and the employment of a development worker. A new grant is applied for each year and has consistently been given over the last 10 years. This has helped BMFF to establish a reputation and role in shaping the life of the city.
- The Development Worker works 22 hours per week and facilitates all that BMFF does, which is a wide and complicated brief. It is an invaluable role, pinpointing where there are needs that should be addressed.



The Revd Tracey Lewis, Bristol Multi Faith Forum

- One of BMFF's main partnerships is with Bristol City Council itself and it has a service outcomes agreement with the Council each year.
- The agreement includes organising the Diverse Open Doors Day that BMFF arranges in the last weekend in February every year. Places of worship across Bristol voluntarily open and BMFF coordinates and publicises this, as well as booking transport and so forth. This has been growing each year and around 400 to 500 people now take part at points during the day.
- BMFF also agrees that it will do work around health and access to health services; and that it will hold at least five BMFF gatherings a year enabling information sharing and conversation between representatives of different faith communities.
- Bristol Inter Faith Group meets and talks about the different perspectives of faiths on different topics. BMFF talks about what the issues are being faced by people in Bristol and by Bristol itself and considers how those involved can speak up as people of faith in to the life of the city. BMFF's meetings are for that purpose. For example, last week, they had met and discussed mental health in society and received feedback on hospice care and end of life care. They had also heard about a project they are involved with around isolation and dementia care.
- The agreement with the Council also requires BMFF to support a negotiated number of consultations on behalf of the Council, for instance on social isolation. This enables the Council to hear from the grassroots and from those who might not otherwise have a voice.
- BMFF is required by the Council to monitor its work to see who has been reached and which faith communities are engaging. This monitoring also helps BMFF to shape its own work.
- BMFF also works with other equalities groups, such as the LGBT group, women's group, disabilities group, older people's forum and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities group. They meet together as 'Being' once a month.
- Importantly, the Council agreement also leaves BMFF with freedom to do things in response to issues when they arise.
- It was not certain what the future funding would be from Bristol City Council.
- BMFF is also involved in long term projects with other partners:
 - It works with the Health Aware Committee on a blood and organ donation campaign. Some funding is given to BMFF to encourage people

from BAME communities to take literature and encourage people to sign up to donate.

- It works with the local community access support service to develop awareness among faith communities of the mental health services available.
- It works with several different agencies and charities on social isolation and ageing and each year holds a health conference.
- BMFF also works informally with other partners:
- Bristol City Holocaust Memorial Day committee
- Ujima Radio, which focuses on reaching BAME communities
- ‘Building the Bridge’, which focuses on the Government’s Prevent agenda and holds workshops on understanding and challenging radicalisation
- Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI), developing a response to the Casey Review (a report commissioned by the former Prime Minister and former Home Secretary looking at integration and equality particularly in the context of isolated communities)

Mr Beattie spoke about the Casey Review report, offering the following reflections:

- BMFF thought it should take a lead on putting this on the agenda with Bristol City Council and thought there should be a Bristol response.
- SARI seemed an obvious partner to work alongside. With the help of the Council BMFF brought together a number of people from faith communities, as well as from groups who had worked on Prevent and Stand Against Hate Crime. This was

to consider how Bristol as a city wanted to respond rather than waiting for the Government’s response. This did a lot for BMFF’s profile and helped work with SARI. Bristol’s recommendations are quite different to those set out in the Report.

Dr Crabtree noted that an Integration Policy was being developed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and it was understood that this was in part responding to the Casey Review report. It might be good for BMFF and others to make their views on these issues known directly to DCLG, as well as to local councils, across the next few months.

Mr Struthers said that BMFF is also working on dementia awareness. The aim is to make all faith community leaders ‘dementia friends’ and to look at their buildings and find out what they can do to make their places of worship dementia friendly.

Ms Lewis offered these final reflections:

- Building networks and connections happens over the long term. Building trust is very important and the fruits of any such work are not immediate.
- After the result of the EU Referendum she was invited to a meeting at City Hall. This was a meeting including representatives from Bristol University, the Chamber of Commerce, the Voluntary Sector, Finance sector, Law sector, Trade sector, the City Council Cabinet and the Mayor. They had an amazing conversation about the response to the Brexit decision and Bristol wanting to remain diverse and open for business.
- Following that she found herself on the Mayor’s Brexit Response Core Group. It is profoundly significant that they wanted the voice of faith communities to be

heard. BMFF organised a gathering of faith leaders within 24 hours to enable them to find out what they were hearing and what BMFF needed to do, in order to be able to feedback to the Mayor's group. The inclusion of faith communities in those discussions was the result of a lot of prior work building partnerships.

The following questions/comments were raised. Responses are in italics.

- What is the relationship like with the Council? Is BMFF under the Council's control or free to act?

BMFF is very aware of this. There have been times when BMFF has made representation to the Council about issues that faith communities need addressed. In recent times a lot of vigils and protests have been held in Bristol on, for example, the Israel/Palestine situation and the Occupy movement. BMFF has been instrumental in allowing people to raise

their voice in protest and to come together and pray together.

- BMFF is proof of what can be done if funding is available. Bath Inter Faith Group originally had funding from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, but has not had anything since then. It has a policy of not applying for Lottery funding. Every city has different challenges and circumstances. Bath is not as culturally diverse as Bristol.

BMFF is in an uncertain position because its current application for renewal of grant has been turned down. The Council has some money available for equalities work but the system has not been developed on how to apply for it.

- How responsive are faith communities to taking part in inter faith work? Do they attend regularly? How do you encourage people to be proactive?



Farzana Saker, West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum, Jasmit Kaur Phull, Lincoln InterFaith Forum, and the Revd Ian Spencer, Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum

Encouraging people to be involved is hard work and can sometimes be dispiriting. People often like to stay with people they know. BMFF carries out constant networking and communicating. The Development Worker visits places of worship. This is an ongoing process because the people on management committees change frequently. Sometimes there is a healthy response from a community and sometimes they are absent for a while.

- Do you find it easy to seek out individuals who want to take risks and move their communities forward? What is the relationship with MPs in Bristol, rather than just councillors?

The Lead Councillor for Equalities in Bristol was involved in the first meeting about the Bristol response on the Casey Review report and she urged BMFF to contact all ward councilors, which they did. BMFF wanted to look at Bristol as a whole city,

especially those areas where the views were more challenging. It is not always the people with formal positions in the city who are the best conduit for communication.

People of no faith also have an investment in there being healthy inter faith conversation and action together. It's therefore good to be able to translate what faith communities are doing together into language that everyone can understand. Problems caused by faith labels are huge. If resilient networks of people of different faiths can be created then this contributes to peaceful neighbourhoods and a more peaceful world. That needs to be said loud and clear to the outside world, not just among faith communities.

Dr Crabtree said that passionate individuals are very important, but it is also crucial to engage faith community bodies and places of worship.



Mark Phillips, Faith Links Bournemouth and Poole, and the Revd Prebendary Michael Metcalf, Stafford and District Friends of Faith

Afternoon session

Reflections from workshops

1 Resourcing our work

- There are many types of resources, including human resources, in-kind support and finance.
- How these are needed and accessed is different in each organisation and each area.
- Certain bodies may prefer to avoid certain types of funding, such as Lottery funding, funding from large supermarkets if those involved are corner shopkeepers, funding that requires a promotion of branding.
- There are websites available to help in the search for funding.
- In-kind resources can usually be accessed, such as speakers, room hire or refreshments, so long as different venues are used in rotation.
- It's important to make the right funding pitch. Tailor your application in language that the funder will understand.

2 Getting the message across

- It's important to think in the round and to consider the following in order:
 - what you are doing;
 - who you are trying to communicate with;

- what you are trying to communicate; and

- what medium you are using.

- It's important to think in this sequence rather than allowing the choice of medium to dictate the message or the audience.
- A wide range of other topics were discussed from 'What does the name of an organisation say about it?' to 'What is the difference between charitable objects and mission, vision and values?'

3 Developing – and refreshing – our programmes

- All local inter faith organisations are very different.
- It is important to review your vision, aims and objectives because they may need to change over time.
- It is important to build up relationships and trust at various levels. This is with own faith community members, with partners and with the public.
- It's good to always bear in mind the societal importance of the work being done in terms of funding, support and thinking through programmes of work.

Inter Faith Week – a platform for cooperation and outreach

The Revd Dr Mark Dimond, South Cardiff Interfaith Network

Mr Dimond offered the following points:

- An earlier Cardiff inter faith network had existed about 15 years ago and the work of the organisation petered out. When it re-emerged about 4 years ago a decision was made to call it the South Cardiff Interfaith Network (SCIN) because SCIN focuses on the practice of inter faith dialogue in the south part of the city where there is a rich tapestry of faith venues. This has been as a consequence of an influx of people from around the world when Cardiff was a principal UK port around the turn of the twentieth century.
- SCIN decided that it would hold two events each year: one in the Spring/Summer and one in Inter Faith Week. They find that the best time for an Inter Faith Week event is the evening.
- Last November SCIN had an inter faith panel discussion on the theme of ‘Life after life?’ Representatives of 7 mainstream faiths came together which gave the audience the chance to compare and contrast the viewpoints of each faith on the matter. It was a very interactive event.
- Inter Faith Week is a useful platform because of the general awareness of the Week in the public eye, which helps to draw attention to SCIN’s work and create media interest.

- In tandem with the event SCIN also launched its booklet entitled ‘Our Faith’, which succinctly describes the main tenets of each faith and has an introduction explaining why faith is important to people in South Cardiff. The booklet is also on sale on Lulu.com.
- Cardiff University also has some inter faith discussion groups during Inter Faith Week.

Dr Crabtree commented on SCIN’s excellent Facebook coverage of its Inter Faith Week event in 2016. It was a very positive example of the use of social media.

Inter Faith Week – a platform for cooperation and outreach

Sarah Mar, Cheltenham Interfaith

Ms Mar offered the following points:

- Each year Cheltenham Interfaith (CIF) organises an Inter Faith Week event jointly with the University of Gloucestershire, and Cheltenham Borough Council.
- CIF provides the justification for the event and a significant number of participants (at least 50% of the CIF members attend the event), and spreads the word through faith communities.
- The University of Gloucestershire (via their chaplaincy) provides the venue and a vegetarian curry dinner and attracts some student attendance.
- The Borough Council provide a meeting room for the working group, secretarial support (minutes, meeting organisation), media releases and access to local VIPs.



Michael Berkson, Cambridge Inter Faith Group, and Mark Michaels, South Shropshire Interfaith Forum

- This joint arrangement has been in place for about 5 years.
- The main advantage of the approach is to spread knowledge of, and involvement in, Inter Faith through the community to a much greater extent than CIF would be able to do on its own. There is a ripple effect.
- The theme of the event varies each year. In 2016 the focus was refugees and the speakers were from Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Involving groups such as this increases the spread of people involved.
- In 2015 the theme was inter faith dialogue and the discussion was facilitated by Justine Huxley from St Ethelburga's.
- The only disadvantage with jointly held events is that you may find one of the partner organisations becomes more dominant. it's important to work well together. In the case of Cheltenham, all three bodies are delighted to be involved and do work well together.

Dr Crabtree commented that this is good example of a pattern of partnership working over time, as the joint organisation of events in Cheltenham has now happened for a few years. It is helpful to have different constituencies involved. When planning Inter Faith Week events, it is useful to build up long term partnerships and to involve organisations which may increase the spread of involvement.



Michael Berkson, Cambridge Inter Faith Group, and Cllr Chaz Singh, Plymouth Council of Faiths

Inter Faith Week – a platform for cooperation and outreach

Michael Berkson, Cambridge Inter Faith Group

Mr Berkson offered the following points:

- Over the years Cambridge Inter Faith Group (CIFG) has marked Inter Faith Week by a Celebration of Community and Faith Fair involving speakers from different faith groups presenting on a chosen theme each year.
- In November 2016, CIFG participated in, and was asked to help with the organisation of, a Cambridge City of Sanctuary Faiths' event on the theme of 'Welcome to the Stranger'.

- The event, at Anglia Ruskin University, was chaired by the Bishop of Huntingdon and about 65 people attended.
- There were 9 speakers – from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan and Sikh communities – each speaking for about 5 minutes to present their respective texts mandating each faith group to welcome and support the stranger.
- Local community groups each had a stall and explained what is being done and how we can all help. The stalls included: Amnesty; Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign; Cambridge Convoy Refugee Action Group; Anglia Ruskin Student Action for Refugees; Cambridge City of Sanctuary; Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum; and Cambridge Stand up to Racism.
- Throughout all the presentations, inter-connectedness of all peoples was prominent as a common rationale behind our welcoming and helping of the stranger. This is one of the most important concepts that local inter faith groups can emphasise.

Discussion about groups' reflections on Inter Faith Week and plans for 2017

After the presentations on Inter Faith Week, there were comments and discussion from the floor about the Week and also about One World Week. Any responses from the chair are noted in italics.

- Herefordshire Inter Faith Group has previously held two successful inter faith services in Hereford Cathedral which included, for example, Quranic recitation. It will not be taking place this year. There

is sometimes a feeling in inter faith work of 'preaching to the converted'. How is it best to reach people who are not already on board?

Inter Faith Week can be a good platform for reaching out to new audiences. The Inter Faith Week Toolkit has many ideas in it. Next year is the 10th anniversary of Inter Faith Week. This is a good opportunity to do a different type of event, perhaps with a local museum, sports organisation or youth organisation to attract new audiences.

- One World Week (OWW) was consulted when IFN was setting up Inter Faith Week and it was decided that they should take place at different times as they have different focuses. OWW focuses on global justice issues, peace and the sustainability of the planet. OWW shows that people of faith don't just focus on faith itself, but also come together to work on projects for the common good. The theme for OWW this year is 'Good neighbours – my world depends on us'.

Social action is one of the aims of Inter Faith Week. OWW is an important week and local inter faith organisations might want to think about getting involved.

Mitzvah Day, Sadaqa Day and Sewa Day are all days within faith communities focusing on social action and service to the community. Sewa Day, for example, has been running a campaign on organ and blood donation. The days take place at different times of the year. IFN highlights these days and they highlight Inter Faith Week. Special days/weeks are a good way to draw in more people from communities.

- Bath Inter Faith Group (BIFG) tries to hold an event each month, and also to mark Inter Faith Week, the United Nations Day of Peace and the Week of Prayer for World Peace, where it brings together faith communities to pray together for peace.

Each community uses its own prayers and this is usually a very popular event. BIFG's Committee consists of representatives of nine religions, its Patron is the Mayor of Bath, and it is lucky in that the head office of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation is located nearby so BIFG has invited its Director to speak at an event. Other local groups might find that there are high profile people or organisations in their area who could be approached.

This year Inter Faith Week takes place from Sunday 12 to Sunday 19 November. It again deliberately includes Remembrance Sunday, in the context of the marking of the centenary of World War One, encouraging people to reflect on the contribution of faith communities to wars and also thinking about peace. It also includes an extra Sunday to still enable other events to take place.

Local inter faith organisations carry out inter faith activities during the year and it can seem as though there is not enough time to hold Inter Faith Week events as well. But the Week is a good way to get a broader range of people involved in inter faith work and to attract the local media. IFN staff enjoy visiting varied events and activities throughout the UK during the Week.

Reflections on the themes of the day

Dr Abdalla Yassin Mohamed OBE,
Newport Inter Faith Group

Dr Mohamed offered the following reflections:

- Today has been a great day and a rich experience. Even though I have been involved in inter faith work for more than 17 years, I am still learning.



**Dr Abdalla Yassin Mohamed OBE,
Newport Inter Faith Group**

- The presentation by Jatinder Singh Birdi is a reminder of the when, after the terrorist attack of 9/11, the Welsh Assembly Government invited faith community leaders to come to its offices to meet and to create an inter faith forum. This is when the partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government began.
- At first the focus was on easing tensions and diffusing fear in the hearts and minds of people in Wales. The late Rhodri Morgan, then First Minister of Wales, said that he was proud of getting faith leaders together in Wales.
- Since that time faith communities in Wales have been working together on initiatives. One example is consultations between Christians and Muslims involving roundtable discussions away from media discussing real issues of concern, thanks to the Muslim Council of Wales and Cytun: Churches Together in Wales. This led on to attending each other prayers and then to sharing

prayers. I am very proud of this and would like to see more local groups working like that. The main aim is to draw communities closer together.

- With regard to religious literacy, there has also been a project for children and schools to learn about the other and to educate Muslim children against violent extremism and radicalisation, called Getting on Together. This was a 5 year project and youngsters took the lead.
- Inter faith organisations are, in meetings such as this, making and sharing good practice. Don't let any moment of success, anywhere in the UK, go by without sharing it with others. We all learn best from each other.

Reflections on the themes of the day

Patricia Stoa, Nottingham InterFaith Council

Ms Stoa offered the following reflections:

- The presentation from Bristol Multi Faith Forum showed how much you can do if you have a worker and how much the contributions of funders should be valued. Nottingham InterFaith Council (NIFC) had funding until 2 years ago and then it was halved and then disappeared. The organisation now has to focus on what human and financial resources it can generate. It has looked carefully at its programmes to see what has worked. It has not been afraid to let go of what cannot be done well on the resources available.
- There is a lot of curiosity in the public about religion. There are lots of people who don't encounter religion at all and are nervous about it. Activities, such as Open Doors Days or the Turban Project or

teaching primary school children about how to wear a hijab, appeal to people's curiosity. A few years ago NIFC held a day called '3 weddings and a bar mitzvah'! This took a lot of work and has not been repeated, but was wonderful. It was all about a Sikh wedding, a Hindu wedding, a Christian wedding and a bar mitzvah – what the different parts of the ceremonies mean, what clothes are worn, what food is eaten and so forth.

- It is always easy to be the host and welcome people in because you feel safe. It is much harder to be the guest and to walk out of your comfort zone into someone else's space. People worry that they will do or say something that will offend. Creating safe spaces is very important.
- One to one and face to face encounters are vital. Every year in Inter Faith Week NIFC holds an event called 'The Listening Experience'. About 80 people attend and sit in pairs, each talking and listening for 10 minutes and then everyone swaps to another pair.
- We all have a lot in common but should not be afraid of differences. Being confident in talking about differences can open up conversations. Everyone brings different gifts to the party. If we deny our differences we are squashing and denying our gifts. There is a need to respect, celebrate and enjoy one another's gifts and remember that these are also gifts we give to the wider community.

Closing words from the Chair

Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Dr Crabtree thanked all the speakers and everyone who had attended, as well as her colleagues who had helped organise the day. The day had been a reminder of all the good work being taken forward and a chance to have honest and wide-ranging discussion about many issues.

It was very sad to hear that there had been an attack in Westminster today, involving the death of a police officer. Every time there is an attack in the UK or abroad, global links mean that it often has an impact here on communities in the UK. It was vital to stand together in the face of incidents that try to divide communities. The day ended with a moment of silence to remember those affected by the attack and other terrorists incidents and to remember all those working for good inter faith relations.

SUMMARY NOTES FROM WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1: Resourcing our work

Exploring the financial and human resources that can help our local inter faith work.

This workshop was facilitated by David Hampshire, Assistant Director, IFN.

Mr Hampshire welcomed participants and introduced the session. The session and discussion focused around six areas under the headings below.

The six areas that were specifically identified during the session are set out below. Three types of resources were

identified during the session: in-kind resources, human resources and financial resources.

In-kind resources

In-kind resources were often overlooked but remain important and can be used as a way of attracting other resources, such as funding. Types of in-kind resource were highlighted and discussed:

- Venues, accommodation, refreshments, printing, technology, advertising and publicity were explored as ways that inter faith groups had benefitted from in-kind resources.



Mohamed Yousef Parekh, Stafford and District Friends of Faith, and Kate Hannan, Devon Faith and Belief Forum/Exeter Inter Faith and Belief Group

- In-kind resources were not without problem at times. Who was offering a venue or support could be problematic and needed treating with sensitivity.
- Participants spoke about their experiences of using places of worship as cost free venues; how some communal organisations, such as the Women's Institute or Rotary, can source free or low cost refreshments; and how co-working with a Local Authority, college, university or health authority can enable sharing of costs and ensure that projects can have some continuity.
- those with financial skills, especially people recently retired who have project planning and management experience;
- those with administrative and office skills;
- those with computer and website skills, especially in the use of social media such as Facebook, which can add value to an organisation in terms of publicity and visibility.

The value of offer in-kind resources was discussed in relation to applications for funding. It was noted that:

- When making bids for grant funding it is important to cost these 'in-kind' donations, particularly when 'match funding' is part of the deal.
- The quality of the in-kind element for a funding application was also important. Therefore it was important to highlight the skills and experience of those providing an in-kind resource to any project. Where those skills are of high value they will strengthen any funding application.

Human resources

It was recognised that all local inter faith work depended on people dedicated to 'the cause'. This was seen to be problematic at times but mostly something that is a strength of being local. What was seen to be significant was how the people involved used the skills and experience that they had.

Participants shared the positive experiences they had from their own personal experience and it was noted that having access to people with the following skills enabled local groups to work better:

Inter faith work can inspire people of different ages to volunteer their time and energy. A clear plan of how volunteers can do this in the local context means that people feel they are offering a contribution that has purpose and this keeps their commitment fresh.

Financial resources

It was recognised by participants that in the past it was easier to get funding for inter faith groups and projects but this had become increasingly difficult in many areas overtime. Some reported that in their areas funding was becoming more available but that this was usually project work.

The groups explored the difference between core and project funding:

- Core funding is the day to day operation without which projects cannot happen. It is often the most difficult to obtain and can entail a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the funder, usually a local authority (LA). The SLA will contain concise aims and objectives with defined milestones and outcomes. Some organisations fight shy of such SLAs and prefer to rely on membership donations for core activities.
- Project funding is money to carry out a project, usually in a fixed time scale. The project application needs to clearly define the project, the cost and the

desired outcome with short, medium and long terms objectives with clearly defined and measurable targets. Sources for project funding are central and local government, commercial donors, charitable trusts or crowd funding.

This led onto discussion about applying for funding.

Applying for funding

The group discussed the difficulty of putting in funding applications and were challenged to think about their human resourcing and perhaps the need to get someone with expertise in this area that can offer their time and experience in-kind.

The following points were made:

- Web searches can identify potential donors but an individual approach is more likely to achieve results than a 'scatter gun' mail shot to funders.
- The approach needs to be geared to the rules of the funder – a brochure or extended description ought not to be used if the funder requires a structured form to be completed.
- The best results come from talking in the funder's 'language' and on their terms.

One of the challenges noted was that the resources needed to identify funders often came at a cost, such as access to www.trustfunding.org.uk. There was no easy solution to this but public library services might be one way of getting copies of the resources published by the Directory for Social Change.

Further sources of funding

Two areas were looked at and discussed:

- Legacies and donations can be of great benefit. These can be achieved when an organisation sells itself to the donor. It is no use having a good purpose or intention if nobody knows about you or if it is not clear that you are open to gifts.
- Goods and services can raise funds. Whether it is a T-shirt, pen mug or wrist band, a calendar or information booklets there is a need to create a saleable product, have the skills and people to deliver it and the ability to continue without the products becoming the purpose of the organisation.

Challenges

Participants discussed the challenges of ensuring they had adequate resources. Two were highlighted:

- There is a danger in being too funding driven. It was easy to go for money and to experience 'mission drift', where the whole purpose of a local inter faith group got lost in a project. What mattered was being clear about the core purpose of the group and getting adequate resources so that it could function well.
- Membership of umbrella bodies can be a problem for small organisations which have an annual income of less than the annual membership fee. These can be the organisations that would benefit greatly from the umbrella organisations' support and there needs to be thinking about how this can be achieved equitably.

Conclusion

In conclusion participants highlighted challenges that they were having, especially with the withdrawal of local authority funding that had occurred in some areas and the reduction in budgets in others. Others, though, noted that there were some local authorities that were



Paramjit Kaur, Plymouth Council of Faiths

giving new grants for work, as noted above. What was proving to be difficult was getting long term funding as opposed to funding for specific and time-limited projects. Key to success is local inter faith groups having a clear vision of how they could support the local authority's priorities and have a clear business plan to help the local authority see how the local inter faith group could make a positive contribution to their work. Examples were given of where funding had been available for asylum seeker programmes.

Mr Hampshire noted that there was help in developing business plans, sometimes local authorities themselves could help with this or bodies like NCVO – such as the Know How Non-Profit webpages: <https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-write-a-business-plan-for-your-charity>

Workshop 2: Getting the Message Across

Thinking about how best to spread the message about our work and to use both traditional and digital forms of communication. With practical pointers and demonstration of social media platforms Twitter and Facebook.

This workshop was facilitated by Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, IFN, who also gave the opening presentation.

Mr Beck welcomed participants and invited them to raise any issues of concern, or topics of particular interest covered under the scope of the workshop that they wished to discuss in particular. The following points were raised:



Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, IFN

- Bristol Inter Faith Group (BIFG) is thinking of new ways to engage undergraduate students from the University of Bristol in inter faith activity. Reaching out to young people is important for the future of inter faith engagement. This is challenging and BIFG is seeking new ways of doing so.
- West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum responded to Brexit by organising a peace walk, and effective communications helped to ensure that 200 people attended the event. Local news coverage ensured that the message of the event was spread widely around the community.
- Lincoln Inter-Faith Forum (LIFF) tries to promote what inter faith engagement stands for – representing different sections of the community, recognising differences and promoting shared values. The group tries to communicate this by organising a meeting on a different topic each month. Last month the topic was

how local faith communities view religious dress. LIFF is trying to be representative of all sections of the community, and hope that this is reflected in their communications strategy.

- When West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum (WWMFF) was formed, many people seemed reluctant to attend, on account of the fact that the previous name, 'West Wiltshire Inter Faith Group', was seen to lessen the distinctiveness of religious traditions. Since the group had changed its name to 'West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum', people were engaging in greater numbers. Perhaps this means that inter faith work is not always about theology, but perceptions also, and small changes can make a big difference.
- Does being called a 'Multi Faith Forum' enabled a local inter faith group to better relate to the council? The next meeting of the Bath Interfaith Group is due to be with the local Diocesan Inter Faith Advisor, when discussion will focus on the difference between 'Multi Faith' and 'Inter Faith', and the impact that this has on public perception of local groups. This is a communications issue.
- The term 'Multi Faith' carries a strong emphasis on being 'inclusive' of different faiths.

Mr Beck gave a presentation using PowerPoint slides. A copy of these is at the end of this note. He offered the following points to begin his presentation:

- The difference between 'inter faith' and 'multi faith' is a question that the IFN office is asked about on a regular basis. Such a question is a communications issue, as it affects how members of the public perceive local inter faith groups and the impacts of their work.¹

- There are a number of key questions to think about when considering communications issues. IFN's strategic review of 2012–13 suggested that it needed to adopt an integrated communications strategy, which it has done.
- The bases of IFN's communications strategy are its 'Mission, Vision and Values', which present the public with the scope of its work in a simple and digestible format.
- IFN tries to place a series of key messages into everything that it presents to the public, using various methods of communication. These are based on its 'Mission, Vision and Values'. In addition to this, it is important to remember that specific projects will have specific messages, and this needs to be reflected in any communications strategy.
- The tools that local inter faith groups use to present their message are important but content is just as important; being active on social media, and having a good website will not improve communications alone.
- IFN's communications strategy is complex because of the different audiences that it has to communicate with. These range from faith communities to local inter faith groups, and also include Government and the media. The audiences of local inter faith groups may be similarly diverse. This means that key messages will be slightly different for different audiences.
- This potential complexity leaves members of local inter faith groups wondering about who does what. There is often the potential for one or two people to be overburdened by doing the majority of communications work.
- One local inter faith group in the north of England has one person that is responsible for online communications, and another person that delivers leaflets to make sure that all constituencies are covered. Having an integrated communications strategy makes sure that what is done in one place matches what is done in others. It ensures that all bases are covered.
- Local inter faith groups should also make sure that they have a clear statement making strategy. Questions such as 'who says what?' and 'who can speak for who?' need to be asked.

Discussion points

- One local inter faith group in the East Midlands agreed a policy on statement making, and this made them confident about making public statements in response to local or national events that affected their work.
- One local inter faith group had found it helpful to have people available at short notice to speak on local radio, on television or to give interviews to local

1 Material about the use of these two terms is included in a number of IFN publications. For instance, the text below is included in Let's Talk:

"'Inter faith' is used in this booklet to describe interactions between people of different faiths, and in some cases between those of religious and nonreligious beliefs. 'Inter faith' discussion often seeks to establish areas of agreement but the term 'inter faith' is not used here to imply lessening the distinctiveness of traditions. It should be noted that some prefer to speak of 'inter faith and belief' or 'inter belief' where people of nonreligious beliefs are involved in dialogue.

The term 'multi faith' is used here of dialogues to describe inter faith dialogues between those involving several faiths. It should be noted that some use 'multi faith' to describe projects or organisations where the emphasis is on joint working rather than interaction."

newspapers. Having people available at short notice ensures that the local inter faith group is seen to provide a quick response to important events and maintains visibility in the community. This also applies to the process of issuing press releases.

- One local inter faith group had similarly benefitted from having people available at short notice to speak to the media or issue statements. The group was often asked for views by the local media, and more often than not, they gave short notice.

Mr Beck continued:

- It is important for local groups to develop positive relationships with local media organisations. Although journalists often wish to tackle controversial subjects, most do not have a negative agenda. It is therefore important not to be nervous. If being interviewed, it might be helpful to ask ahead of time what the first question is going to be. If being interviewed on television, it is advisable to look at the lens and not the interviewer to give the impression of speaking directly to the audience.
- When using websites and social media for communications, it is important to always agree on passwords and designated contacts. If a website is being designed externally, make sure that the password is handed over in advance of completion.
- Website security is an important issue, and care should be taken to minimise disruption to online activity from outside influence. Most cases of website infiltration do not come from people specifically seeking to undermine the work of the organisation in question, and are mostly just for fun. With this in mind, it is important to choose strong

passwords that include letters, numbers and symbols.

- Websites usually carry a design and maintenance fee, and it is important to make sure that this is accounted for before the website is commissioned and to ensure that a website can be properly resourced year round.
- Groups should not use a single password for multiple platforms. Keeping passwords on paper rather than on a computer is safest, as paper copies of passwords cannot be remotely accessed. If storing passwords on paper, however, it is important to keep them in a safe place.

Discussion points

- One local inter faith group is considering using the instant messaging service WhatsApp to share information. Their communication is currently done by email, but what are the potential benefits of using an instant messaging service?
- WhatsApp is a more informal method of communication. It is quick, and to the point.

Mr Beck continued:

- Two advantages to using WhatsApp are that, firstly, it allows for urgency, for example by allowing faith leaders to communicate quickly in response to fast moving events, and, secondly, it offers greater clarity than using emails, which are not always checked on the move and can be lengthy and mixed up with other material, such as advertising or marketing. WhatsApp is a very direct method of communication.
- IFN has been increasing and improving its use of social media in recent years. IFN now has separate Facebook and Twitter accounts, and also operates further Facebook and Twitter accounts for Inter

Faith Week. Working out what to post is sometimes complex, and a great deal of care has to be taken.

Sometimes, even the most bland statement can offend, and emotive reactions are mostly ignored. IFN's policy states that it does not deal with complaints through the mechanism of social media.

Mr Beck showed a copy of IFN's Vision Statement.

- IFN also has its charitable objects, mission statement and values statement prominently available to the public.
- Values are the core principles that IFN tries to embody in its work, and seeks to display in everything that it does. Charitable objects can only be changed through the Charity Commission website.

Discussion points

- One organisation had changed its objects to have more of an inter faith focus. This now made the organisation's charitable objects different to the work that it pursues. The idea of Mission, Vision and Values' statements would better explain the work of his organisation to the public.
- How is it possible to succinctly articulate these things? It is challenging given the complexity of local inter faith work. Modern media does not like to use large chunks of text, but prefers shorter, more succinct statements.
- Such statements are most useful if they are concise and easily translatable and explainable to different audiences. People also react differently to different colours, and it is important to bear this in mind.



Participants in workshop discussion

- Some colours have cultural significance, and when using a colour or colour scheme in communications, careful consideration should be given to avoid causing unnecessary offence that may damage the credibility of a group's work.
- Some faith communities are insistent on the use of certain colours.

Mr Beck continued:

- When IFN was thinking about colours to use on the local inter faith locator on IFN's website, great care was taken to ensure that none of the colours used may cause offence.

- When using mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, the screen looks different. Most new websites should be fully operated on a range of devices and a designer can help with this.

Mr Beck showed IFN's new website, which works on a range of devices and gave a brief demonstration on the use of Facebook, including advice on running a Facebook page. He advised on the use of Pages Manager, which can be used to administer pages and groups. It features analytics, amongst other things, to enable users to assess the impact of their posts.

Getting the message across



What is communication?

Key questions

- What is our overall purpose?
- What are our different audiences?
- What are the key messages we want to communicate?
- What tools can we use to communicate?

Our overall purpose

Organisational aims and vision

"Our vision is of a society where there is understanding of the diversity and richness of the faith communities in the UK and the contribution that they make; and where we live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good."

- IFN's Vision

Our overall purpose

How will we use communications to achieve our aims/ realise our vision?

Examples

- Raise awareness of our work/ activities
- Act as point of referral for queries about faiths
- Persuade people of the value of inter faith engagement
- Keep members actively engaged

Our different audiences



Our key messages

Key messages are likely to vary from one communication to another

Examples

- About us (what we do, who we are, why...)
- Events (date, time, place, topic, format, cost)
- Reports (what, when, was it effective?)
- Statements/ responses

Communication tools



Joining the dots



Joining the dots



Who does what?

Everyone has different skills, and sharing out tasks is important. Tasks might include:

- Drafting stories/ content
- Editing and proof reading
- Designing leaflets/ posters/ flyers
- Designing website
- Updating website/ Facebook/ Twitter
- Posting/ delivering newsletters

Who does what?

It is also important to work together as a team and discuss how your roles overlap:

- Can stories from a newsletter be used on Facebook or the website?
- Should the whole newsletter go on the website?
- When you send out a flyer, does the person in charge of Facebook know to create an 'event'?
- If essential information changes, does the website person get told?
- If you send a group email, does someone make sure people without email are kept in the loop?

Who says what?

- Does your group have an agreed policy on who can speak for it/ make statements/ give media interviews?
- Are there agreed parameters, like 'do not speak on behalf of faith communities'?
- Does someone need to sign-off on newsletter articles/ website updates/ Facebook or Twitter updates?

Tips – press releases

- Keep it short – journalists are busy people!
- Include good photos
- Add contact details and website address
- Use big, clear text with lots of space
- Try to use catchy lines or phrases
- If there are opportunities to interview someone or take photos, say so
- You can use 'embargoes' to give prior notice
- Keep trying!

For more detailed tips, visit: <https://www.interfaithweek.org/resources/media-tips>

Tips – interviews

- Know in advance if there are areas you cannot comment on (check your policies)
- Before you start, ask the interviewer what the first question will be
- After each question is asked, pause and take a full breath in and out before answering
- If being videoed, look into the lens not at the interviewer
- Feel free to give non-answers: *'I'm afraid that's not something we can comment on at this stage'* or *'we have not taken a view on this as a group'*

Tips – websites

When commissioning a website, it is important to agree some things in advance:

- Is the website administrator just in charge of making the system work, or also writing content?
- Does someone else need to sign-off on content before it is published?
- Agree that all the passwords and access information will be shared with a nominated person after the website is created.
- What security systems will be in place?
- Are there monthly, annual or biannual bills to pay?

Tips – social networks

- Try to pick names/ usernames that make your page/ profile easy to find
- Agree who is in charge of updating your accounts and when they should do so
- Pick strong passwords!

See Government-backed websites www.cyberstreetwise.com and [Cyber Essentials](#) for more

Workshop 3: Developing – and refreshing – our programmes

Looking at how to develop successful programmes, even on limited resources. Considering also how to renew our connections and programmes and respond to challenges.

This workshop was facilitated by Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, IFN, who also gave the opening presentation.

Dr Crabtree welcomed participants. Points from her introductory presentation are below. These complement the handout for the workshop, a copy of which is at the end of this note.

Our vision and our goals

- If you are looking to refresh the work of an organisation, it is important to look at your vision.

Scoping and planning

- It is helpful to do a scoping exercise every few years to explore the needs of the locality and to find out about it's make-up/demographic.
- It is important to check who else is doing work in the area and to avoid duplication. There may also now be some secular agencies doing inter faith work.
- Partnership working is also valuable to consider.

Resources and organisational underpinnings

- People are often even more important resources than funding.
- It can be helpful to have funding. However, good work can be done with limited resources.
- Sometimes organisations can settle into having a pattern of the same people involved without any turnover. This might work well or there might be a need for change so that there can be new perspectives and also so people have a chance to develop new skills.
- A skills audit can be useful.

Maintaining and growing participation

- Many people are interested in inter faith work.
- Contacts with local places of worship, schools and so forth are important. Personnel at those change so connections need to be kept up to date and it is important to stay in touch, not just to visit once.
- Responding effectively to change is important.
- IT know-how is increasingly important. For some people this can make them feel disempowered and fearful. Opportunities for learning can be helpful.

Programmes

- Sometimes organisations think they should not repeat a type of event because they've done it before. However, if it is popular it might be good to do it again and there may be new members or visitors who have not had the chance to experience it before.

- Some groups hold small house group meetings as well as larger events.
- Public agencies are often keen to engage with inter faith work. It is helpful to have a communications strategy to stay in touch with them. It is good to consider who you are communicating with and how, for example, through email, Facebook or Twitter.

Affirmation and celebration

- This is very important.
- Local inter faith organisations are often very hard on themselves, but in reality are achieving a lot based usually only on volunteer power.
- It is good to thank one another. This helps to avoid burnout and enables people to move to the next stage.

- As a participant at an earlier IFN local inter faith day said, “There should always be room for joy!”

Discussion points

Young people and succession planning

- At Cheltenham Interfaith many of the members are ageing and succession planning is difficult so it is good to discuss this.
- In the Muslim Council of Wales for about 10 years the leaders were all the same age. Then the momentum fell away, younger generations and women faded. They decided to get young people to shadow the older ones and as part of this they added their own interest and ways of doing things, so now there are quite a few dynamic young people involved. The Council started initially after the attack of 9/11 but now has new objectives, getting youth to work together on one of some activities, such as sport matches followed by inter faith engagement.
- Inter faith engagement needs to be dynamic. There needs to be faith in life – this has a double meaning of both religion and trust.
- It often requires know-how to work with young people and sometimes suitable qualifications or checks are needed.
- Some local inter faith organisations work with local youth organisations rather than doing the work directly. They also work with local schools and local sports organisations. Such relationships can take a year to work towards.
- 3FF and The Feast do interesting work with young people on inter faith. Organisations could invite staff from these bodies as speakers. It is good to talk to people with experience of youth work.



Marie Hackett, Bristol Inter Faith Group

Growing participation

- Sometimes people say that the inter faith group already involves people from their faith community so they do not need to bother getting involved.
- Motivations for joining vary.
- It is important to be able to explain the benefit to people of taking part in inter faith activities, in terms of the impact on people's lives.
- You can suggest that people look at particular issues such as their environment, whether there are any issues affecting them and their family, etc. Inter faith meetings are not just for older people.

Programmes

- South Shropshire Interfaith Forum has been reviewing its work. The recent Visit My Mosque Day has shown that many people are interested in finding out about faith communities. There have been many good and inspiring ideas today, such as organising a multi faith cookery demonstration.
- Warwick District Faiths Forum's core activities, such as the Faiths Calendar and Faiths Trail, have not changed much over time. Conferences are only held when needed, not for the sake of it. This year WDFF is holding a conference on 'faith and inclusion'. Regular activities are useful because people get used to them. Taking one or two people to meetings with you encourages them to be involved.
- The WDFF conferences and Faith Trail are open to the public. Following research, Saturday morning was found to be the best time for this. (Warwick has no Jewish place of worship and there are Liberal Jewish participants who always attend.) A conference needs to be on a topic that people want to hear about, for example

on the criminal justice system or mental health awareness.

Communications

- Bristol Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) has a consultant who maintains its Facebook page and this enables BMFF to reach many more people.
- It is important to know the target audience to work out your communications.
- Facebook is a window to an organisation's work. IFN has two Facebook pages: one for IFN and one for Inter Faith Week. When member bodies have posts on Facebook that are visual IFN can share them.
- Facebook can take the pressure off because you can view things anonymously.

Social action

- People are happy to help with good causes. For example, in Exeter some faith communities volunteered to contribute food for an event if tickets could be sold. £1,000 was raised from the dinner. Someone who had been teaching in Africa said that there was a shortage of books and that books were being thrown away in Devon, so the inter faith group offered to pay the postage costs. After the earthquake in Nepal, the Exeter Faith and Belief Group raised £2,000 and handed over a cheque on the same evening to a charity helping those affected. People in the UK are very kind-hearted and generous when there is need.
- People are often happy to help when they can see the purpose. If you know your faith neighbours society is a stronger place and we are more peaceful people. It is good to remember the bigger picture.
- Some local inter faith organisations choose to support one charity each year.

- At the recent AGM of the Cambridge Inter Faith Group the question had been asked why an inter faith group was involved in social action. Shouldn't someone else be doing it? Any social action in collaboration with someone else makes it much stronger. The whole is bigger than the sum of the parts.
- It is always great to hear about social action/justice work at local level.
- How social action interrelates with inter faith work is a constant challenge. No one else is doing inter faith dialogue but other groups/charities in society are doing social action. But if social action is the way to engage people in inter faith dialogue then it is another approach.
- Values are as important as the mission.

Working with others

- Since the reduction in Service Level Agreements partnership working is becoming informal, messier. Local inter faith organisations are quite vulnerable in some respects and need to be wise about statutory partnerships. They could benefit from change management training.
- Sometimes local inter faith organisations are asked to carry out certain pieces of work. The Chair of WDFF has been asked to speak at the Quaker Yearly Meeting and at an NHS Trust event. This is because of the reputation that WDFF has taken time and effort to build.
- Being part of one group is good, but it is also good to be part of other groups, such as SACREs and community groups, to build up links.

Achievements and celebrations

- Bristol Inter Faith Group has been working with people of different faith communities for the past 40 years. It has covered a lot of ground. Now at the Open

Door Days the reception at the places of worship is very welcoming. This creates a sense of achievement and the feeling that people of other faiths have progressed and come to understand one another.

- Bristol used to be a city with problems with prejudices, race relations etc. A lot of work has been done to diffuse tensions and build harmony. The challenge now is to not go backwards. Currently there are underlying issues, for example, about migrations. Faith communities need to come together to give witness to what they can do. All faith communities are trying to do the same thing.
- It is good to make a clear stand in solidarity on issues where needed. This is not just for the benefit of faith communities, but for the benefit of wider society.
- It is important to remember the journey travelled and successes achieved.

Workshop 3 Handout

Developing – and refreshing – our programmes. Looking at how to develop successful programmes, even on limited resources. Considering also how to renew our connections and programmes and respond to challenges.

1. Our Vision and our goals

- What are our founding objectives, our vision and our ‘mission’

2. Scoping and Planning

- What may our vision and goals mean in our current operating environment?
- Is it time to review what we are doing? What might be involved in that?
- The importance of planning
- Scoping – scanning the environment
- What are local needs?
- Who else is engaging with similar needs?
- Considering partnership working on particular strands

3. Resources

- Planning a programme with an eye to resources
- Human resources
- Financial and in-kind resources
- Dangers of being ‘funding driven’

4. Maintaining and growing participation

- Patterns of participation
- Encouraging participation
- Dealing with challenges
- Handling and responding well to

change

- Reaching out to particular groups (younger, older, women, different faiths/ beliefs)

- Membership and wider participation/engagement

5. Organisational underpinnings

- The less visible but crucial underpinnings of successful programmes
- People
- Communication – making your events known and raising their profile

6. Programmes

- Building a programme
- Different activities
- Targeting different audiences
- Faith groups
- Involving civic leaders
- A distinctive dimension to your programme
- Special Weeks and Days
- Partnership working

7. Affirmation and celebration

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

- 10.45 am** **Registration and refreshments**
- 11.00 am** **Opening of the morning session, welcome and setting of context of the day from the chair: Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN)**
- Welcome to Bristol** from Bernard Omar of Bristol Inter Faith Group on behalf of BIFG and the Bristol Multi-Faith Forum.
- 11.15 am** **Local inter faith organisations – a vital resource in our communities**
Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chair, IFN
Reflections from his role as Co-Chair of IFN and also from the perspective of involvement, as Chair of the Warwick District Faith Forum, in local inter faith initiatives. Why local inter faith organisations are so important and some of the ways that they make a difference to their local communities both in terms of building and strengthening positive relationships and understanding and standing against intolerance and hatred.
- 11.30 am** **Q and A**
- Dialogue on the spot** A chance to talk with your neighbours
- Plenary discussion**
- 11.45 am** **Working to increase religious literacy and counter prejudice I**
Local inter faith initiatives play an important part in countering prejudice and increasing understanding about different faiths and beliefs.
- A team presentation from **Canon Dr John Hall**, Devon Faith and Belief Group and Trustee, Inter Faith Network for the UK; **Cllr Chaz Singh**, Plymouth Council of Faiths and the Turban Project; and **Ravindra Nathwani**, Exeter Interfaith and Belief Group schools programme.
- Q and A**
- 12.10 pm** **Working to increase religious literacy and counter prejudice II**
Farzana Saker, West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum
- Q and A**
- Sharing of other groups' experiences of working for religious literacy and to tackle prejudice**

12.30 pm	<p>Working in partnership with local authorities and others</p> <p>How do and can local inter faith groups work with their local authorities and through other local partnerships to make a difference to their local communities?</p> <p>The Revd Tracey Lewis, Chair, Bristol Multi Faith Forum with BMFF colleagues</p>
12.50 pm	<p>Q and A</p> <p>Sharing of other groups' experience of partnership working</p>
1.10 pm	A vegetarian sandwich lunch will be provided
1.55 pm	<p>Workshops</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Resourcing our work – Exploring the financial and human resources that can help our local inter faith work. <i>Facilitator: David Hampshire, Assistant Director, IFN</i> 2 Getting the message across – Thinking about how best to spread the message about our work and to use both traditional and digital forms of communication. With practical pointers and demonstration of social media platforms Twitter and Facebook. <i>Facilitator: Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, IFN</i> 3 Developing – and refreshing – our programmes – Looking at how to develop successful programmes, even on limited resources. Considering also how to renew our connections and programmes and respond to challenges. <i>Facilitator: Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, IFN</i>
2.55 pm	Tea break
3.05 pm	Reflections emerging from workshop discussions
3.15 pm	<p>Inter Faith Week – a platform for cooperation and outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Revd Dr Mark Dimond, South Cardiff Interfaith Network • Sarah Mar, Cheltenham Interfaith • Michael Berkson, Cambridge Inter Faith Group
3.35 pm	Discussion about groups' reflections on Inter Faith Week and plans for 2017
3.45 pm	<p>Reflections on the themes of the day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Abdalla Yassin Mohamed OBE, Newport Inter Faith Group • Patricia Stoa, Nottingham InterFaith Council
3.55 pm	Closing words from the Chair
4.00 pm	Close

SUPPORT THE INTER FAITH NETWORK'S WORK TO INCREASE INTER FAITH UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION

We need your help to ensure that the Inter Faith Network for the UK's work to promote inter faith understanding and cooperation continues and grows, helping people of all backgrounds to live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good.

Gifts at all levels are much valued and make a real difference. You can donate directly at www.interfaith.org.uk/donate or via PayPal or JustGiving at <https://www.justgiving.com/interfaithnetwork-uk>

Donations can also be made by sending a cheque to The Inter Faith Network for the UK, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH.

REMEMBERING A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

If you would like to make a gift in memory of a loved one, please get in touch by emailing remember@interfaith.org.uk or call us on 0207 730 0410.

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

By leaving a gift in your will to the Inter Faith Network for the UK, you can leave a living inheritance to help deepen and strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation in this country – for now and for the future. If you are thinking about making a will, the best thing to do is to get in touch with a professional will writer, such as a solicitor or advocate; they can help to ensure it is legally correct and that your wishes are met. If you have already made a will, you can still make an addition or amendment in the form of a codicil. If you would like to pledge a gift, please provide our name and address, along with our registered charity number 1068934.

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES.

You can call us on 020 7730 0410 or contact us at ifnet@interfaith.org.uk

Thank You!

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

Inter faith understanding, respect and cooperation is ever more important in the UK today.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) links and works with national faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, academic and educational organisations with an interest in inter faith relations, as well as with other organisations including Government and other public agencies, to strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK. IFN is unique in its scope and role both within the UK and in Europe. It has been bringing organisations and people together for over 25 years and its work is always evolving to meet fresh needs.

IFN carries out its work of strengthening good inter faith relations through:

- providing advice and support to inter faith organisations around the country to add value to their work
- running a helpline which each year assists hundreds of people with their inter faith projects or issues
- advocating for support of local inter faith groups and national and regional inter faith initiatives
- producing resources, in cooperation with its members, on issues of common concern such as faith based dietary practice
- bringing its member bodies and others together regularly to meet and discuss issues of common concern
- other programmes of work including Faith and Public Life and Inter Faith Week

For more information about IFN, visit www.interfaith.org.uk.

The work of IFN is supported by faith communities, trusts, other donors, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Front cover photographs (top to bottom):
Jatinder Singh Birdi, IFN Co-Chair and Warwick District Faiths Forum, and Dr Abdalla Yassin Mohamed OBE, Newport Inter Faith Group; Farzana Saker, West Wiltshire Multi Faith Forum, Jasmit Kaur Phull, Lincoln InterFaith Forum, and the Revd Ian Spencer, Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum; The Revd Tracey Lewis, Bristol Multi Faith Forum; Mohamed Yousef Parekh, Stafford and District Friends of Faith, and Kate Hannan, Devon Faith and Belief Forum/Exeter Inter Faith and Belief Group; Participants in workshop discussion

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