

The changing face of local inter faith dialogue and cooperation





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Report on the 2019 National Meeting

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Welcome and opening remarks

The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE

Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

The meeting began with a period of silence, remembering all those working for inter faith understanding and cooperation around the world.



Bishop Richard Atkinson:

Welcome to the 2019 National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. We are delighted that people from many of IFN's member bodies from around the UK are present.

As you know, this year's National Meeting focuses on local inter faith cooperation and dialogue. Local inter faith engagement is a vital part of communities living well together and working to create understanding and friendship, sometimes in challenging circumstances. The Inter Faith Network for the UK has, since it was established in 1987, advocated strongly for the importance of local inter faith activity and worked to share good practice, as well as to offer support and advice. Today's meeting is an opportunity for IFN and its member bodies to consider some of the current possibilities and challenges of working locally for inter faith understanding and cooperation.

Offering a perspective from my own faith tradition, most commentators of the Christian ecumenical movement would agree that a few years ago the Churches probably reached a point where there were significant challenges. Like all organisations or institutional activity, there was a danger that it was becoming too bureaucratic, too top-heavy, that those involved in it were getting too old – because they were the original pioneers who had been around for 30–40 years – and financing was becoming more complicated. The movement has found some ways forward, one of which is an emphasis on local action and bringing people into shared work at the local level. Some might draw a parallel with local inter faith engagement which may be experiencing some similar challenges and also exploring solutions.

That is why I think the agenda today is so important. It is to be real about some of the challenges that are out there but also hopeful and visionary about some of the opportunities. To help us do that we have an excellent array of presenters and facilitators and a great deal of knowledge and experience in the room. We hope it will be an enjoyable and interesting day with much opportunity for shared learning. As always, our aim is to have a good and constructive day in which values of respect, love, honesty and integrity are at the fore.

Grassroots inter faith engagement in the UK today – snapshots of a changing environment

Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE

Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Bishop Richard Atkinson: We are going to begin with a presentation by IFN's Executive Director, Dr Harriet Crabtree, who will be speaking about the local inter faith landscape today and how this has changed in recent years.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used during this presentation is at the end of this note.



Dr Harriet Crabtree:
Good morning.
The last ten years have seen a considerable increase in inter faith activity at local grassroots level and also change. I shall be looking at some aspects of this and drawing on IFN's work and other

sources to do so. I am grateful to IFN's member bodies and to IFN's Trustees from the local inter faith category for helpful conversations that form part of the backdrop. These Trustees are currently the Revd Canon Dr John Hall of the Devon Faith and Belief Forum, Manjit Singh Bhogal of Dudley Borough Interfaith Network, Patricia Stoat of Nottingham InterFaith Council and, of course, IFN's Co-Chair drawn from the

local inter faith organisations category, Jatinder Singh Birdi.

1 Signs of change

First, it may be helpful to consider briefly how we discern increase in activity and 'change'. For a start, is there more inter faith activity now than there was 10 years ago? How might we gauge that?

Number of multi-faith and bilateral inter faith bodies

One answer might perhaps be to compare the number of known multi-faith and bilateral local inter faith bodies between 2009 and today. Slide 5 shows the figures in 2009 (235 multi-faith local inter faith organisations and also 40 CCJ branches and some other bi- and tri-lateral groups) and 2019 (249 multi-faith local inter faith organisations and also 29 branches of the Council of Christians and Jews, 16 groups of the Jewish Muslim women's body Nisa-Nashim and 5 Women's Interfaith Network groups). The numbers show a gradual increase on the multi-faith front and a big flip on the bilateral front because of the arrival of Nisa-Nashim.

However, the figures, of course, need interpretation. Behind the relatively limited rise in figures for multi-faith groups lies a story of a number of groups

having come into existence across the period, while some others have closed. For example, there has been the arrival of Kettering Interfaith Forum and Swansea Interfaith Forum, while some other initiatives such as Wycombe Sharing of Faiths and Merseyside Council of Faiths (MCoF) have closed. MCoF commented in their email of earlier this year about their closure that they believe that their work is done: that they have helped spark a number of new initiatives. Those newer initiatives, however, are not traditional local inter faith organisations and thus would not be reflected in the chart.

So, in other words, simple numbers of multi-faith groups are helpful indicators of increase but in themselves tell us a limited story.

Inter faith initiatives and projects

Alongside numbers of formal groups, another indicator of increase of local inter faith activity could be the presence and growth of one-off inter faith initiatives or projects such as the hundreds supported across the last ten years by a number of Government programmes. These would include, for example, local inter faith projects supported through the following funding schemes [Slide 6].

- The Faith in Action programme which accompanied the Government's 2008 policy *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multifaith Society* which ran from 2008–11;
- the *Near Neighbours Programme of the Church Urban Fund*, supported by funding from MHCLG [2011–present]; and
- other sources such as Prevent funding, the Voluntary Action Fund in Scotland, and other schemes such as National Lottery Awards for all.

If you add up the number of projects that appear in their reports, you see a quite vibrant picture of all sorts of different activities, so you could say there's been a big upswing.

Elusiveness of data

Careful evaluation reports have been produced for the various major grant schemes. However, there has not been a long-term overarching research project designed to monitor impact across all the different programmes over the years in terms of growth or change in inter faith activity or the impact on individuals. As far as I am aware, nobody has actually looked across all the different funding programmes to see what was left after people were funded. Did the project spark things that survived? How is that local inter faith activity continuing? In a way, therefore, the data is elusive.

Similarly, there is extensive evidence on social media and through available reports and newsletters of a growth of other local inter faith activity such as inter faith sport or inter faith activity linked to schools or colleges but there is not a single narrative that captures this growth and change. The same is true of lots of information you find in the traditional media. When you look in the newspapers and watch television these days, you will see more about inter faith engagement than 20 years ago. But the putting together of that story, the actual evidencing in fact, is often very fragmentary.

For these kinds of reasons we need to be clear about the limitations of some of the kinds of data available. At the same time, however, even though we may not have data that might support a rigorous documentation of change and impact, it is not unreasonable to argue that there has been growth and also evolution of local inter faith grass activity and to aspects of this I now turn.

2 A diversifying pattern of grassroots engagement

Local inter faith organisations continue to be at the heart of much grassroots engagement in different localities and we will be coming in a little while to their important work. First, however, I will speak about two other key features of the

evolving local inter faith landscape: the rise of direct faith group involvement in inter faith activity and, second, the widening pattern of different types of initiatives.

Increased role of faith communities

If you looked at local grassroots activity some years back, you would probably focus just on local faith groups and a number of other small initiatives. The big, big change is that faith communities are much more at the centre of this than they were.

Even as little as ten years ago, inter faith engagement was often seen as an ‘added extra’ – as something that was marginal to the concerns of local places of worship and their members. While reticence can still be found, inter faith engagement is increasingly seen by faith groups as normal – and necessary – and faith organisations are increasingly leading on this. For example,

- Many national faith community bodies provide guidance or support for inter faith engagement by their local members; they also model inter faith engagement through their own meetings and cooperative endeavours.
- Local faith groups often invite other faith guests to key moments. For example, when a new Hindu mandir opened in Kent recently, members of the North Kent Inter Faith Forum were among its launch guests.
- Local faith organisations and their leaders often participate in the local inter faith organisation for their area and in some towns and cities faith leaders are part of ‘faith leader groups’. [Slide 10]
- Some places of worship and religious organisations such as Blackburn Cathedral and the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham have dedicated programmes for inter faith learning and encounter.
- Increasingly, despite current security concerns, places of worship are opening

for people of different backgrounds to visit and learn.

- Some churches and mosques have established twinning arrangements, or are exploring more informal links with other local places of worship.
- At times of difficulty, faith communities reach out to each other to stand together – for example with vigils of solidarity after terrorist attacks in the UK or on places of worship in other countries.
- Faith groups participate together in the consultations and programmes of local authorities and other statutory authorities.
- Many are also taking part in Inter Faith Week and Scottish Interfaith Week as well as Mitzvah Day, Sadaqa Day and Sewa Day.

So these are some of the ways that faith communities are playing an increasing role at local level.

A growing range of different types of inter faith initiative

There are also many other different kinds of inter faith initiative at local level:

Structured ongoing meetings for dialogue and cooperation involving particular faiths such as the branches of the Council of Christians and Jews, groups linked to the Christian Muslim Forum and to organisations such as the Women’s Interfaith Network and Nisa-Nashim.

There are also independent groups in a number of places in the UK, offering opportunities for discussion and shared action between members of particular faiths, for example Buddhist-Christian or ‘Abrahamic’.

Projects and programmes tackling particular issues, such as climate change Inter Faith Week often sees such initiatives. [Slide 11] Citizens UK provides a framework for inter faith or multi-faith engagement on particular social issues such as rights and wellbeing of refugees or the Living Wage at local level.

Inter Faith Week Hundreds of events and activities – such as that in the previous example – take place to mark national Inter Faith Week in November and Scottish Interfaith Week.

Opportunities for local dialogue and cooperation as part of other national programmes such as the World Congress of Faiths and the Faith and Belief Forum which also does some direct support work, for example in Barking and Dagenham.

Areas with multiple initiatives In some cities and larger towns there are a multiplicity of different types of initiative. In Leicester, for example, there are currently over 15 different kinds of inter faith initiatives.

Initiatives involving many types of local organisation which take place with the involvement of different places of worship, schools, the voluntary sector, the police, the local authority and others Local authority engagement is very significant because councils provide the framework for much of civic life. This is reflected in the ongoing engagement of many local authorities with inter faith bodies and initiatives in their areas. It is also reflected in the choice of five local authorities to pilot the UK Government's Integrated Communities Strategy in England. Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Peterborough, Walsall and Waltham Forest are all at this time exploring many ways to increase cross community engagement.

So, we are in a changing world where your organisations have all, in their different ways, been very successful in helping encourage a climate where faith communities are coming to the fore. The local authority framework has also been

very important and continues to be, as reflected in the Integration Areas that have been chosen, linked to the Integrated Communities Strategy. It is also reflected in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in different ways. The encouragement of Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, the Faith Minister, has been very important, as has that of the First Minister in Scotland and Ministers in Wales.

3 The work of local inter faith bodies

Importance of local inter faith bodies

Around the walls, you will see a number of boards highlighting different aspects of the activity of local inter faith bodies. Local inter faith bodies play a very important role in creating opportunities for learning, cooperation and dialogue in their local communities.

“Local inter faith groups carry the enthusiasm of people wanting to understand their own faith better as well as know the faith of others better. Over time such people become true friends and create the social glue that builds relations across difference. They make society a good place in which to live well together.” Devon Faith and Belief Forum

“Local inter faith groups bring people from different faiths and cultures together, often for the first time, to celebrate the positive work faith groups bring to our communities. It is so important for inter faith groups to provide these safe spaces for people to meet and grow to know and understand others from different backgrounds, communities and faiths, as well as doing good in their communities.” Northampton Inter Faith Forum

Pattern and activity of local inter faith bodies

Slide 13 is a map showing where local inter faith bodies are distributed throughout the UK and Slides 14 and 15 give a flavour of some of the types of activities carried out

by local inter faith bodies. If you are here from a local group, you probably recognise a number of activities that you do. Slides 16 to 20 show photographs of local inter faith activities. Displaying this work is very important. It is not just for everyone here today but also for those who see the report of the meeting which will go far and wide. At IFN we always try to promote everything we have captured within meetings. IFN's Co-Chair Jatinder Singh Birdi has recently been at an inter faith event in Singapore and has been sharing good practice from the UK. Whether it is within the UK or internationally, sharing of good practice is the key.

There are, as noted earlier, approximately 250 such multi-faith bodies across the UK. There are also 29 branches of the Council of Christians and Jews, 16 groups of the Jewish Muslim women's body Nisa-Nashim and 5 Women's Interfaith Network groups.

The kinds of activities that local inter faith bodies carry out and hold vary. This reflects their different make up and local context.

They may include:

- a. Dialogues, discussions and talks on faith and social issues
- b. Advice and information to people about inter faith activity
- c. Visits to local places of worship and 'inter faith walks' and trails
- d. Religious literacy training and tackling prejudice
- e. Standing in solidarity and tackling tensions and hate incidents
- f. Participation in civic events and ceremonies
- g. Work with schools and colleges
- h. Cultural and sports activities
- i. Inter Faith Week events and also Mitzvah Day, Sadaqa Day and Sewa Day

- j. Social action projects to help the local community
- k. Social events
- l. Being consulted by the local authority or other public agencies
- m. Women's activities
- n. Activities for and with young people

Change and evolution of local inter faith bodies

In many respects, the work of local inter faith bodies remains similar to that of these bodies across the last 25–30 years. However, there are some discernible trends.

Noticeable is the increased interest in working together on social issues such as climate change and supporting refugees. Recent IFN local inter faith practitioner days have shown participants also more interested in youth focused and solidarity focused work. The impact of extremist and terrorist events, as well as hate crime, has of course contributed to the latter.

One might perhaps say that there is more emphasis on the part of some local inter faith bodies on the outward facing work and somewhat less on seeking to be formally representative of the religion and belief demography of their areas. Most still seek to engage actively the different faith communities but the ever increasing diversity of areas and the complexity of reflecting that, where structures and sizes of community differ, has become such that a more general 'reflecting' is what is more commonly now found.

IFN will shortly be exploring again the issue of local inter faith groups and funding. Anecdotally, however, the impression is that the level of groups with sufficient funding for a worker or workers has dropped and there are currently no UK wide or national specific Government grant schemes available to local groups at the level that would support staffing. Though

as we shall hear later today – the Near Neighbours programme of the Church of England is supporting projects in a number of areas of England, including through small grant support.

Local authorities do not appear to be seeing local groups as any less vital to their areas, despite fragility to the structure of some of the groups. Last summer, an IFN Intern, Bashir Ali who is here with us today, assisted in some phone desk research on local authority engagement in a number of areas from which their keenness to engage remained evident. This keenness was very much reflected in a presentation by Peterborough City Council Chief Executive Gillian Beasley to a recent IFN local inter practitioner day.

Another point that is worth mentioning is the discontinuation of Government support for the regional faith forums after the Faith in Action funding of 2008–2011. Three such forums continue (in London, the North East and the South East) but the absence of the kind of funding that allowed for helpful support of local groups in all the former regions meant that most were ultimately unsustainable. This was a real loss.

But it would not be right to end this section on a low key note because overall local inter faith bodies continue to develop to meet the array of challenges and to rise new possibilities and their work is of enormous importance to their localities.

4 Some emerging themes

The diversifying landscape

I have sketched out briefly a few aspects of the changing environment of grassroots inter faith engagement.

One key message coming through is of rapid diversification of the local inter faith environment, with faith communities becoming ever more visible and active participants in the process – working through inter faith bodies but also independently. Another is the continued

importance of local inter faith bodies, working within an environment of an ever-growing range of short and long term initiatives. While there may be complexities about how all these are interrelated, that is overall a healthy place to be in our ever more diverse society.

The evolution of local inter faith bodies

In many respects, the work of local inter faith bodies is the same as it has been for the last 20–25 years. Would those of you here from local groups broadly agree that there has been some change but the core remains the same? *Participants agreed.* However, a noticeable change is an increased interest in social action. Many of you are now doing projects, for example working with refugees, with the homeless, with food banks, in a way that you might not have been doing 15 years ago. There has also been increased interest in solidarity-focussed works, sadly necessary in the context of hate crime and the terrible tragedies of terrorist attacks. There is also increased engagement with young people.

The penultimate change to highlight is a definite shift in terms of representability. There was a time when groups put a lot of energy into ensuring that they were representative of their local areas to the last dot. We now live in a much more diverse world where structures are more complex and where groups, even internally, are very complicated. In light of this, there has been a discernible shift towards being more reflective than representative. There is a still desire to reflect and represent a particular context especially when working with faith communities and local authorities, for example in the context of a faith covenant. But the shift has been more to look at outward-facing work, such as social action. This is how it has come across through comments that people have made at recent local inter faith practitioner days that IFN has held.

The challenge of finding funding

Many of you in local inter faith groups have talked about the challenges of operating with big vision, huge personal commitment and good buy-in from faith communities, but without funding. An enormous amount is expected of local inter faith bodies. The changing world has meant that there's more focus on them and a hope that they can be do much to address cohesion problems involving faith at local level. Some already do this; for others, resources are too stretched to make the impact that they potentially could.

The work of local inter faith groups is enormously important and it would be good to see fresh support and funding opportunities.

In the long term, really there needs to be more support, encouragement and sharing, not just at the UK or national level but also at the regional level to support their work.

Conclusion

To conclude, I have picked up very rapidly some of the things that illustrate increase, flourishing, and evolution of local inter faith activity. I have also touched on some rubbing points.

The presence and continued work of local inter faith bodies is of great significance to this country. It is a real privilege to work through IFN with so many of you at the local level. Thank you.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you, Harriet. That was a distilled summary of all the insights you have from the important and very valued work that you do for us. Thank you.

Grassroots inter faith engagement in the UK today: snapshots of a changing environment

A short overview presentation from IFN



1

Overview

- Introduction
- Signs of change
- Widening pattern of local inter faith engagement
- Importance of local inter faith bodies
- Conclusion

2

Introduction

- The Inter Faith Network and local inter faith activity
- Content of overview

3

Identifying Change

- How do we discern change?
- Has grassroots activity increased?
 - Numbers of local inter faith bodies
 - One off projects and programmes
 - Elusiveness of measures

4

Inter faith group numbers 2009 and today

- In 2009 there were 235 multi faith local inter faith organisations. There were also 40 CCJ branches and some other bi- and tri-lateral groups.
- In 2019 there are 249 multi faith local inter faith organisations. There are also 29 branches of the Council of Christians and Jews, 16 groups of the Jewish Muslim women's body Nisa Nashim and 5 Women's Interfaith Network groups

5

Some grant schemes which have funded local inter faith projects

- The Faith in Action programme which accompanied the Government's 2008 policy *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multifaith Society* which ran from 2008-11;
- the *Near Neighbours Programme of the Church Urban Fund*, supported by funding from MHCLG [2011-present]; and
- Other sources such as Prevent funding, the Voluntary Action Fund in Scotland, and other schemes such as National Lottery Awards for all.

6

Elusiveness of measures

- Absence of overarching analysis of relevant schemes
- A broad picture of change still possible

7

A diversifying pattern of grassroots engagement

- Faith communities and local inter faith engagement
- A growing range of different types of inter faith initiative

8

Faith communities and local inter faith engagement

- Modelling and supporting local inter faith engagement
- Participating in local inter faith bodies and faith leader groups
- Hosting other faith guests at key moments
- Dedicated programmes for inter faith engagement
- Open door days
- Twinning and friendship links
- Solidarity
- Side by side engagement with public agencies
- Inter Faith Week and faith-based social action days

9



10



11

Importance of local inter faith bodies

"Local inter faith groups carry the enthusiasm of people wanting to understand their own faith better as well as know the faith of others better. Over time such people become true friends and create the social glue that builds relations across difference. They make society a good place in which to live well together."

Devon Faith and Belief Forum

"Local inter faith groups bring people from different faiths and cultures together, often for the first time, to celebrate the positive work faith groups bring to our communities. It is so important for inter faith groups to provide these safe spaces for people to meet and grow to know and understand others from different backgrounds, communities and faiths, as well as doing good in their communities."

Northampton Inter Faith Forum

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13

Some types of local inter faith body activity I

- Dialogues, discussions and talks on faith and social issues
- Advice and information to people about inter faith activity
- Visits to local places of worship and 'interfaith walks' and trails
- Religious literacy training and tackling prejudice
- Standing in solidarity and tackling tensions and hate incidents
- Participation in civic events and ceremonies

14

Some types of local inter faith body activity II

- Work with schools and colleges
- Cultural and sports activities
- Inter Faith Week events and also Mitzvah Day, Sadaqa Day and Sewa Day
- Social action projects to help the local community
- Social events
- Being consulted by the local authority or other public agencies
- Women's activities
- Activities for and with young people

15



Local practitioners in dialogue at an IFN meeting



Bolton Muslim Girls' School visiting a Swaminarayan Mandir with Bolton Interfaith Council

16



Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship's recent Walk of Friendship

Preston Faith Forum invited people to join them at the Flag Market vigil to remember the victims of the Christchurch Attacks



17



Interfaith Vigil held by Interfaith Wolverhampton for the victims of the Manchester Arena Attack



Barnet Multi Faith Forum's 'Energy Garden' Event in Finchley

18



The Mitzvah Day 'Big Chicken Soup Challenge' at East London Mosque, held with Muslim Aid

An inter faith Sewa Day blood donation event



19



Children colouring a poster as part of a Northampton Inter Faith Forum event in

Participants in dialogue at South Cardiff Inter Faith Network's 'young, free and religious' event



20

Impacts of changes – challenge and opportunity

Rabbi Warren Elf MBE and the Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi

Director and Co-Chair, respectively, Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M)

Bishop Atkinson: Against that initial painting from Harriet of some of the background of both opportunity and challenge and changing contexts, we are now going to focus down on one local scenario. It is good to be able to welcome Rabbi Warren Elf and the Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi. Warren, you addressed us two years ago at IFN's 30th Anniversary Meeting in the aftermath of the atrocity at the Manchester Arena. It is good to have you back, giving us an insight into the local context in Manchester with some of the opportunities and challenges.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used during this presentation is at the end of this note.



Rabbi Warren Elf
MBE

Rabbi Warren Elf: FN4M is Manchester's forum for inter faith and multi-faith work. It was set up in March 2004 with the specific brief of engaging faith communities in the decision making processes of the City.

Originally the City Council provided a grant of £2,500 per year for us to operate (which was actually more than we needed in the first two years). That amount then rose to

£8,500 and then, within another couple of years, to £18,500 as we showed we were active and making a difference with our schools work, inter faith dialogues, conferences and consultation work.

Our reputation was improving and our impact in many areas was far above what might be expected. When Manchester City Council set up different funding initiatives we successfully applied for £25,000 per year for 3 years, with a view to employing a part-time Community Development Worker and an Administrator, opening a Multifaith Centre and setting up a Women of Faith project. We were also successful in two Awards for All bids and getting a donation towards setting up the Manchester Multifaith Centre in memory of Henry Guterman.

However, in recent times, we have been facing change and a number of challenges.

Manchester Multifaith Centre (MMC) was based at Ada House until 31 May 2017 when the building was closed for redevelopment after the building was bought by developers. In the four years that we had the MMC, it became a recognised base and home and was well used by us and other groups – there were at least 20 events there in the last five months before it closed. Since then our office has been at the Wai Yin Centre (the Chinese women's centre) and we have been looking for new premises to re-open the Manchester Multifaith Centre.

Two years ago we applied to the City Council for funding as part of the new Our Manchester scheme. We were unsuccessful. Charles and I were both at the briefing event and both felt that faith was not being considered on any level, even inter faith and multi-faith. When the Council was challenged on this it was ignored. They gave us a transitional year's funding and support to devise a Development Plan but told us that further funding was not available because we did not fulfil certain requirements.

A year before this we were unsuccessful in an application to the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund but they met with us and recommended ways of improving the bid because they like what we are doing. We are currently redrafting the bid. We have also been redrafting our Business Plan as well as looking at establishing other local links and methods of fundraising.

The picture in Manchester has been changing, especially with devolution and the appointment of a Mayor, Andy Burnham, and the establishment of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).



The Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi:
I'm going to take you through a journey of what we decided to do to remain relevant and also survive in the current climate.

Greater Manchester devolution [Slide 2]

In Manchester we have moved away from having a Police and Crime Commissioner and now have an elected Mayor. Greater Manchester also now has a devolved Health and Social Care Budget and that's led to the formation of a Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership (GMHSCP). The GMHSCP has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Voluntary,

Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in Greater Manchester. Some of those Councils for Voluntary Services have been very clear that faith is distinct and we have therefore not been part of those conversations. So, although they have been given probably up to £270,000 each year for 3 years, faith is not part of it.

Various hospitals are currently merging. The Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust covers the whole of Manchester and is currently the biggest Trust. We also have the Northern Care Alliance which was formed by bringing together two other Trusts.

Cuts in funding have meant that local voluntary sector organisations are working more closely together. Manchester's Mayor is a politician and the voluntary sector managed to encourage him to include an accord with the voluntary sector in his manifesto, so there is a formal Accord between the Mayor of Greater Manchester, the GMCA and the VCSE sector.

www.gmcvo.org.uk/publications/accord-between-mayor-and-gm-combined-authority-and-vcse-sector

Renewal – re-branding and re-strategising [Slide 3]

In view of the changing landscape, we decided to go through a phase of renewal – as people of faith do – deciding to re-brand and then to re-strategise. We were successful with some student inter faith dialogue funded by the Home Office, but then it came with some in-kind support so we decided to re-brand. The 10 local authorities across Greater Manchester are working more closely together and so we decided to galvanize different inter faith groups around Greater Manchester to see how we can work together more.

Another key thing we have to do is try to get representation at the Greater Manchester Faith Community Leaders' Forum, which the Bishop of Manchester convenes. Until now, statutory partners having often been ticking their 'faith box'

by just engaging with the Bishop so other Christians traditions and other faith traditions have not been part of those conversations. We have been advocating for a seat at the Faith Community Leaders' Forum for a couple of years.

In 2016 FN4M was approached to get involved with a faith and mental health conference. This went very well and luckily the Chief Officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership was a person of faith, a practising Baptist, and he was quite clear that faith is quite unique. We negotiated a seat at the Devolution Reference Group, which manages the £270,000 a year budget.

Work streams [Slide 4]

Internally, as a network, we have had to adapt to the changing landscape and decide what to focus our energies on to have the maximum impact. We have decided to go with 5 work streams:

1. Education – Going into schools, at least with two faiths or more, having conversations about the similarities within our faiths but also the differences.
2. Inter-faith and Multi-faith – Increasing our inter faith and multi-faith activities.
3. Environment – Environment and climate change was one of our Mayor's priorities and it affects us all.
4. Health and Social Care
5. Policy and Influence (including Media) – Looking at how we influence policy as an inter faith organisation.

In rounding up, I'll talk briefly on the last two points: Health and Social Care and Policy and Influence.

Health and social care [Slide 5]

In 2016 there was a Faith and Mental Health conference. It was followed by a Faith and Health Conference in 2017. In 2018, we spent the whole year developing a Memorandum of Understanding which

was meant to replicate what the GMHSCP had with the VSCE sector. Towards the end of 2018, the GMHSCP decided that they couldn't hold faith groups accountable in the way that they might hold charities accountable, so they asked if we could instead call it a network.

Also in 2018, we were asked to get involved in a Faith and Health Joint Strategy Needs Assessment. Our local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) wanted to engage more with faith groups. Last year was the first time, during Ramadan, that they produced a leaflet on diabetics and fasting and so forth. We got involved with that, and it was signed off at a public meeting, which was great.

In January this year, because of the change, we decided to hold a Summit where we put case studies of best practice and how faith groups are working much more closely with CCGs across Greater Manchester. The Summit went well.

In February, I had the opportunity to brief the Population Health Transformation Team about how they can benefit from working a lot more closely with the faith groups. For example, they wanted to increase oral care within the Jewish community but had concerns about how closed the community was, so we supported them.

Between March and June we were developing the Greater Manchester Interfaith Health & Social Care Network.

This month we will be presenting to the Partnership Executive Board which has agreed to give FN4M £20,000 to start the network.

This year we would also like to help the CCG develop its work plan on the basis of the Needs Assessment carried out last year.

Policy and Influence [Slide 6]

When it comes to Policy and Influence, it is all about engagement, engagement and engagement. We have to be at the table. If

we are not at the table, decisions will be made for us and without us.

We are working hard once again to get buy-in from the Greater Manchester Faith Community Leaders' Forum because that is critical.

The Mayor has been approached to sign the Charter for Faith and Belief Inclusion (developed by the Faith and Belief Forum). But if our Mayor is signing up to that, how would that translate into local communities? How would that translate into engagements and resources? So FN4M has put that on hold and are waiting until our faith leaders are available and briefed before the signing goes ahead.

We are currently working with the GMCA Engagement Team and hoping that for the first time, there will be a national Inter Faith Week activity with the Mayor resourced by the GMCA. We also want to continue our work with the GMHSCP local CCGs across Greater Manchester.

Faith communities involvement [Slide 7]

As faith communities, in order for us to keep our work relevant, there are so many initiatives with which we have to keep getting involved. One of the successes we have had is around homelessness and it's one of the priorities of our Mayor. He has come up with a scheme call a Bed Every Night through which they try to get people off the street and provide them with a space. He has acknowledged, and the evidence is there to back it up, that 80% of the current provision is by faith groups! So, recently, when the police, health and social care organisations and others decided to put £1.5 million into the scheme, the next question we put to them was 'How does that translate to those places of worship and faith groups who are involved in that agenda being resourced for that work?'

FN4M also continues to be involved in issues relating to hate crime, climate change, and transport reform. It is also maintaining a good relationship with the

Dean of Manchester as well as Manchester Cathedral and developing that beyond the 'tick box' exercises which were historically often all that existed.

Rabbi Elf: There have been numerous times that FN4M has been at the hub of community cohesion and developing programmes to bring people together in the face of terror and an increase in hate crimes.

In a project funded by the Home Office through the Prevent strategy and supported by the City Council, we facilitated student inter faith dialogues at the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester College. This has led to further ongoing work with the College, including partnership work to challenge hate crime, and we are already looking to develop more work next year.

We have been involved in the City Council's Radequal programme (radical and equal) since its inception. FN4M participates in the Radequal Community Network and, within this, is helping to develop the role of faith communities in affirming Manchester as a dynamic and cohesive city. The three principles are Challenge, Connect and Champion! As part of this we received a grant to make a short film (and five shorts as well) looking at the similarities of all faiths and those of no faith in and across Manchester, with respect to their hopes, ideals, values, concerns and fears. Which groups have fears is noticeable and can easily be linked to the increase in hate crimes we see across the city.

We have looked at safeguarding and the complex issues involved for faith communities. We held a meeting with representatives of the Manchester Safeguarding Boards and publicised the need for communities to address the issues and ensure they are up to date in dealing with them.

Much of this work has been in partnership with the City Council, through a variety of departments.



Major Samuel Edgar (Salvation Army), the Revd Philip Brooks (United Reformed Church in the UK), Ven Kalugamuwe Kassapa Thero (Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB) and Valerie Skottowe (Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group)

The last year has also been a busy year with lots of good things happening. The year, as always, has been a mixture of planning and responding!

We received a National Diversity Award nomination for the 2nd year running, but were not shortlisted, partly because we had no time to send supporting information.

We have been working on a new Business Plan, which we hope will be a massive improvement on the current one, although we are aware that it still needs drastic review and improvement.

We recently hosted an inter faith dialogue on SRE (Sex and Relationship Education) for the BBC Panorama programme, which is likely to be broadcast on 8 July. We may also use this topic for the Greater Manchester Interfaith Network conference later this year, on which Near Neighbours are interested in partnering with us. The BBC came to us because Manchester is a diverse and very multi faith city and they had heard we have the connections, links, relationships and run activities with the different faith communities.

FN4M received funds this year from the MCC Equalities fund (up to March 2019), the Home Office for a specific BSBT project, Near Neighbours to support our Women of Faith programme and Awards for All for work to support our Reaching

Communities application. We have started to investigate other sources of funding and are exploring establishing links and support from local businesses, individuals and communities. We have also just launched a membership system and will be charging for our schools work where the schools can afford it. We are also launching a Spiritual or Faith Awareness Training Programme for businesses and statutory organisations.

We have also been exploring, as I noted, re-establishing the Manchester Multifaith Centre and have a couple of options to follow up over the summer.

We have never been so busy and although funding is a major issue (and my job therefore in particular is at risk) we are optimistic that if we can learn to sell ourselves properly, and enlist support from people who can help us do this, that the future will be good for FN4M.

Bishop Atkinson: Rabbi Warren and Charles, thank you. That locates the context in Greater Manchester. It is in a sense a story of change and response. Indeed it reminds us also of some of the key issues, whatever our local context.

FAITH NETWORK FOR MANCHESTER

Rabbi Warren Elf
Reverend Charles Kwaku-Odoi

1



Greater Manchester (GM) Devolution

- Move from Police and Crime Commissioner to elected Metro Mayor
- Devolved Health and Social Care Budget
- Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership (GMHSCP) MoU with Voluntary Sector
- Hospitals mergers- Manchester Foundation Trust and Northern Care Alliance
- Voluntary sector cuts – closer collaboration - Greater Manchester Devolution Reference Group
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority Accord with the Voluntary Sector

2



Renewal - Rebranding and Restrategising

- In-kind support from Home Office
- Reviewing Stakeholders and Influence – internal & external
- Galvanising Interfaith bodies across the City-region – Greater Manchester Interfaith Network
- Representation at Greater Manchester Faith Community Leaders Forum
- Faith and Mental Health Conference
- Interfaith Representation on Greater Manchester Devolution Reference Group

3



5 Work Streams

1. Education
2. Interfaith & Multifaith
3. Environment
4. Health & Social Care
5. Policy and Influence (including Media)

4



Health & Social Care

- 2016 - Faith and Mental Health conference
- 2017 - Faith and Health Conference
- 2018 - Faith and Health MoU Development
- 2018 - Faith and Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- January 2019 – Faith and Health Summit
- February 2019 – Population Health Transformation Team Briefing
- Mar-Jun 2019 – Greater Manchester Interfaith Health & Social Care Network
- July 2019 – Presentation to Partnership Executive Board
- Sep – Dec 2019 – Develop Faith & Health JSNA Work Plan

5



Policy and Influence

- Engagement | Engagement | Engagement
- Greater Manchester Faith Community Leaders Forum – FN4M standing agenda
 - Greater Manchester Combined Authority – Engagement Team and Accord Principal
 - Faith and Belief Inclusion Charter
 - Greater Manchester National Interfaith Week Launch Event with Mayor Andy Mayor
 - Greater Manchester HSC Collaboration

6



Faith Communities Involvement

- Homelessness
- Hate Crime
- Climate change
- Transport Reform
- Fire Service Reform
- Poverty Truth Commission
- Partnership with Manchester Cathedral –Challenging Hate Forum, Peace & Unity Event, Climate Change, Scriptural Reasoning, etc.

7



Q & A

- www.fn4m.org
- mail@fn4m.org.uk
- @fn4m

8

Plenary discussion

Bishop Atkinson: We now have a few minutes for either direct questions to our contributors or reflections on the agenda we have begun to explore.

Don de Silva (Faiths Forum for London): Thank you to the speakers of this morning. I would like to ask if there any specific examples locally or nationally where inter faith action has really changed policy or brought about changes in critical issues either in the local situation or nationally.

Dr Crabtree: I will offer a comment on the part of your question that related to policy. I think the work of local inter faith groups has had a definite impact on policy at national and local level. So, too, has the work of national inter faith bodies and initiatives. For example, the Inter Faith Network has, I believe, helped create a policy environment where the importance of local inter faith work has been increasingly recognised.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) makes a significant grant toward IFN's work programme and also supports the Near

Neighbours programme of the Church Urban Fund as well a number of other initiatives. This is one reflection of inter faith issues being taken seriously at policy level. But the levers are both internal (to national and local government) and external. The work of the faith communities as well as local groups is central.

Dr Iyadh Daoud (Crawley Interfaith Network): Dr Crabtree, in your presentation you said that you thought there had been a shift in representation because the world is more diverse. In Crawley we like to make sure everyone is included and feels included. Could you clarify what you meant?

Dr Crabtree: Inter faith groups will all have their own perspective on inclusion and they should develop their own ways of pursuing that. An impulse to include people is a profoundly human impulse. What I was touching on was the issue of practicality. There was a period when there was focus on a kind of 'one for one' form of official representation. For example, if you had five mosques in your local area, then you should have five mosques represented on



Esmond Rosen (Barnet Multi Faith Forum) and Waleed Ahmad (Swindon Interfaith Group)

your committee. Where areas are small and have not got a huge diversity and where there might not be huge diversity within faith communities, that kind of complete representation might be possible at a pinch (although very labour intensive to operate). However, in most multi faith cities or towns, it would not be possible on a committee of a local inter faith body to represent every single church, gurdwara, mandir, mosque, synagogue and so forth. There is more likely to be a diversity of faith communities reflected but not at that level.

Elizabeth Chappell (Islington Faiths Forum): Thank you especially to the speakers from Manchester. I was here at the National Meeting two years ago and I found it very interesting to listen to their presentation because it represents the good that can come out of a terrible event. We have a parallel, if slightly smaller, story in Islington. The question about the extent to which we can influence policy is very key to this.

On the one hand, we find politicians talking more and more about faith interaction. I noticed in the wake of those two events [the Manchester Arena and Finsbury Park Mosque attacks] and other political incidents that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition almost had a trade off at Prime Ministers Questions about how much inter faith work goes on in their constituencies. However, that doesn't necessarily translate into either funding or recognition. The Communities Minister came to our area and said that we would be invited to Westminster but nothing transpired.

On the other hand, faith communities themselves are becoming more confident, for instance one of our local mosques is now known as a centre for inter faith dialogue and as a model of good practice in this country. As faith groups become more confident, they start to attract more interest from people who want to co-opt faith communities into politics.

There is a very fine line to be trodden between the work behind the scenes which is where we've mainly been known and having a more public role which could then also lead to good and bad outcomes. The lesson that I have taken from the last two years is the importance of creating and maintaining dialogue, relationships and networks. Unless we are creating dialogue, then our function is incomplete.

Patricia Stoa (Nottingham InterFaith Council): I was very grateful to the presenters from Manchester for telling us about their amazing work which has obviously been flourishing. I think the partnership and engagement line is the way to go, but where do you find the people who have got the time to do the work, to engage with the local authority, with the CCGs and other organisations in order to form these partnerships and to flourish in this way?

Mr Kwaku-Odoi: Rabbi Warren Elf is employed by FN4M to work 2.5 days per week. My work as Chair is voluntary. I have found over the last couple of years it is much easier for me to ask for money to employ someone than to ask for money to pay myself. We have found that when people say no to you in one meeting, then they encounter you at another meeting and another and so on and you can build relationships of trust. Then they take you seriously. We have a number of volunteers. We also try to find allies. I have also been learning the language of commissioning. So, for example, when I brief the Health Transformation Team, I say "We can reach tens of thousands of people on Friday, Saturday, Sunday. You need people to be screened, you want to detect Atrial Fibrillation, you want to detect hypertensives. We can give you the access. We have a currency of trust that you can never buy." So, we learn their language and then we try to support them to develop our business case.

Es Rosen (Barnet Multi Faith Forum): Barnet Multi Faith Forum takes FN4M very seriously as a role model. I often read what you are doing and try to build



Charanjit Ajit Singh (Hounslow Friends of Faith) and Sonoo Malik (Harrow Interfaith)

that into what we are doing in Barnet. We work closely with the voluntary sector. I'm interested to know whether we need to specialise and have a faith sector engagement that is separate from the voluntary sector engagement? At stakeholder meetings in Barnet they say the faith sector is part of the voluntary sector. However, we think we need a separate voice. I would be interested in a dialogue on that sometime during the afternoon.

Charanjit Ajit Singh (Hounslow Friends of Faith): One of the concerns I have is that now when local authorities come to the voluntary sector and faith sector, they think they can offload their work onto the sector. However, the voluntary sector doesn't have the financial or human resources to do the work. This problem is increasing day by day.

Rauf Bashir (Building Bridges Pendle): I just wanted to share an insight from the North. The resources of local authorities are stretched so they have to work out what are the priorities for them. There are other ways that authorities are supporting Building Bridges Pendle (BBP). We are coming up to the two year point of a four year funded programme where the funder said we needed to find a match funder. The

local authority agreed to give us matched funding which was a big plus. That funding is helping in developing and sustaining community cohesion. It is a question of leadership on these matters. The local authority has to get involved. It is not just about resources or policy. If it does get involved, it may well naturally turn to existing structures. We now at BBP have a dynamic double dimension of cohesion and inter faith. So the local authority's support for us and our work has simply evolved in a different way.

George Ballentyne (Christians Aware Faith Awareness programme): I am the Voluntary and Community Sector Manager in the office of Leicester's elected city mayor. I've held the post for 6 years and for 7 years prior to that I worked as Equalities and Diversity Officer for Leicester Council of Faiths. So I've seen it from both sides of the fence: I've seen the inter faith organisation dependent on funding from the local authority and now I am the person who advises the city mayor on funding for local inter faith work. Leicester is a model of good inter faith relations. In a city of 300,000 people it's got 105 mosques, 27 Hindu mandirs, 12 gurdwaras, 250 churches, 2 synagogues, a Jain centre and 4 Buddhist centres. There's no funding for inter faith work in Leicester but we do try to

accommodate faith groups in the way that the city council works with the voluntary and community sector. One of my roles is to create a 5 year strategy for how the City Council in general, and the city mayor in particular, supports the voluntary and community sector and that encompasses the inter faith organisations. We can't at City Council just respond to what we call the Oliver Twist model where someone comes from an organisation and says, 'Please, Sir, can we have some more?'. The really big problem that we have is that the faith community groups and organisations, whether working separately or together, don't have a plan or a strategy about how they can work on social issues. It is part of my role to help them develop one. I'm looking forward to the workshop on that topic later today. There are people here from local authorities and they are happy to engage in active conversation about how to bridge that gap and do something that's valuable for all concerned.

Sonoo Malkani (Harrow Interfaith):

Harrow Interfaith no longer gets any funding at all from the local authority apart from for the annual Holocaust Memorial event. I am so grateful that they allow us funding for that because we have a very successful programme at Harrow Arts Centre every year. We are also fortunate to be able to use the Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow for our very effective inter faith work. I have had the good fortune of working with Harrow Police for a few decades and have liaised between them and Harrow Interfaith. I am also part of the Independent Advisory Group in the borough, which tries to keep our communities informed when there are difficult incidents within the borough. We believe, although some disagree, that Harrow is the most religiously diverse borough not just in the country but in Europe! This means that people have many connections across the world and we have always reminded people to be mindful of this when things are happening internationally. I'm a Hindu from India and I was brought up to respect all religions, and to believe that the whole world is one

family, but a lot of people don't think that way. When we have difficulties back home, whether it is, for example, the Sri Lankan community, the Hindu community or the Muslim community and they start venting their spleen and coming out in front of Parliament or marching on our streets, that concerns me greatly. I keep reminding our inter faith group, that whatever happens anywhere else in the world, we must try to keep our peace and harmony intact and show them how we should be behaving. We do a lot of partnership working and I think that is a good way forward for inter faith. When people come to demonstrate or do anything wrong in your borough, you can stand together and stop just about anything. Please make lots of partnerships, whether they are voluntary or with the statutory sector.

Mr Kwaku-Odoi: I agree with the comments made by George Ballentyne that we need a plan, we need to be clear, we need to be visionary, we need to be able to help our statutory partners connect with what we are doing and show the difference we make time and time again. I also agree we need to coin an inter faith sector or faith sector. We should appeal to our Church of England colleagues. You wield power, you wield influence and it's about how when the local authority always knocks on your door you say, "We are very diverse. There are people from many different faiths around and it's about how we resource and value what happens across faith communities".

Bishop Atkinson: I can't possibly talk for the Church of England in Manchester but, in my role as a Church of England bishop, I take what you say.

We've had contributions from a range of people including people who have travelled from some distance to be here and I just want a chance to say thank you to those who got up very early today to be here. It's good to have wide representation. Thank you for all your contributions.

A perspective on variety of initiatives and the importance of the involvement of faith groups

Geetha Maheshwaran

London Boroughs Faiths Networks

Bishop Atkinson: It is a pleasure first to welcome Geetha Maheshwaran, a member of the London Boroughs Faiths Network. She will be talking about LBFN's work to support local inter faith organisations in London and some of the opportunities and challenges. She will also be talking about the importance of the involvement of faith groups from the perspective of her role at the Shree Ghanapathy Temple in Wimbledon which plays a very active part in local inter faith activity.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used during this presentation is at the end of this note.



Geetha Maheshwaran

Geetha Maheshwaran: Good morning everybody. I'm going to talk a little about the London Borough Faiths Network (LBFN) first and then I'll talk about our specific case at the Shree Ghanapathy Temple.

London Boroughs Faith Network

LBFN is an informal network of practitioners. It brings together people from religious and intercultural groups who

are improving their neighbourhood or borough. We work with our local councils, police, NHS and other local statutory bodies to improve public services, especially for those who rely on them most. There are about 250 places of worship per borough. The Network brings together beautiful buildings, extensive networks of people who trust each other and reliable structures for sharing information. Building on this network, LBFN has developed its Safe Secure Resilient training to enable places of worship to work together, not separately, and to know what to do in an emergency, how to contact public services, other local responders and vulnerable groups, what messages to pass on, and how to work together across communities.

The LBFN's training course at New Scotland Yard in 2017 ('Safety and Security for Places of Worship in London: supporting each other across religious traditions') covered keeping people and buildings safe, responding to emergencies (flood, pandemic, chemical attack, cyber attack) and hate crime. It also covered making solid connections with emergency planners and local public sector officers, making checklists, providing first aid until help arrives, evacuation drills and learning from the experience of past emergencies. The Reverend Mike Long from the Notting Hill Methodist Church was one participant. His church was the first major church that

opened its doors after the terrible Grenfell Tower fire when local government ground to a halt and there was no one there to help those who had survived and those who were suffering. His was one of the most poignant presentations on the day because he told us what it was like, how he had no training in such things, how he had had to deal with the press and other aspects. The joy for many of us within faith places of worship is that we have this hunger to help, we have amazing volunteers and we have a building space, so at a time of emergency we are ready to help. However, we don't always have the experience or the technical expertise that is needed and so part of the training is to get us ready to become resilient. In reaction to the terrible terrorist attacks that took place in 2016 and 2017 we felt that we should do something positive, in order to counteract the negativity, and the training course was our response.

LBFN strives to bring together all the borough multi faith networks in London – some are independent charities and some are supported by their local council. It has taken part in and organised many projects.

As part of the Olympic Truce (2012), people from LBFN's network gathered on London's Millennium Bridge and rang bells from all our communities, including temple bells, bicycle bells and cow bells! It was a show of unity at a time when there was a lot of negativity.

London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, produced a film, London Is Open, which showed that London businesses and shops were open and welcoming. So LBFN did a similar film (in 2016) for places of worship. It is a lovely video showing many different places of worship opening their doors and welcoming people in. It was also a great response to the negativity that was around at that time.

In light of the unease and uncertainty surrounding Brexit, LBFN organised two events, at City Hall and at New Scotland Yard, in March this year for people to come and air their concerns and fears. There were speakers from London Resilience, the Met

Police and London councils to give us information and to reassure us.

The main aspect of many of LBFN's projects is to build strong networks, to exchange contact details, to have a dialogue that carries on, because then when there is an emergency you know who to call. Developing friendships is the most precious thing because you know that you can contact the person straight away and they will act quickly. This was part of the Safe Secure Resilient course that we did at New Scotland Yard with the Met Police. They were fantastic. They gave us all the technical details we needed. For the courses that we will be running in the next two years, the idea is to cover all 12 Metropolitan Police Borough Command Units in London, with the police officers in each area providing the links that are needed. We met in the evenings for one evening a week for a few weeks at New Scotland Yard. Food was a very important aspect of it as people came after work. Sitting and eating and talking together is a good way to build relationships. Food plays a very important part in most of LBFN's project work.

A lot has been said about funding. For places of worship money is not what stops us from doing the work that we need to do. Our volunteers are incredible. They offer their service to humanity out of the goodness of their heart, as an offering to God. So we have a huge resource that can be offered to local government in times of emergency and it continues without funding. But we have to build in sustainability as well. Faith communities shouldn't be regarded as a cheap alternative to local government or to charities or others. We have to show that we provide a professional service – that we open our arms to the people who are suffering, but that there is sustainability and governance in the work that we do.

Shree Ghanapathy Temple

The Shree Ghanapathy Temple in Wimbledon is the oldest fully-consecrated South Indian temple in Europe. It began in

1981 and has been evolving ever since. At home in India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia temples are purely there for the ritual side of Hinduism. In the UK we have had to evolve to suit the needs of our devotees, so we cater not just for their spiritual needs but also for their emotional needs and physical health. As leaders of places of worship we have to open our ears and listen to what their changing needs are.

As part of our work we provide emotional counselling. For example, the temple runs depression groups and one to one counselling. This is provided through clinicians from the NHS so that we have all the governance in place and safety issues are taken care of. The war in Sri Lanka was a major influence for us in starting this work in the temple. This work has been taken out to the New Testament Assembly Church and to other places of worship in South London through the Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network.

For many people their place of worship is a place of safety, particularly in regard to mental health issues. Our community was very reluctant to go to Springfield University Hospital, which provides mental health services locally, because of the stigma of mental illness. So we provided confidential areas within the temple grounds. These are community spaces which aren't consecrated so anybody can go there and we offer the services, not just to our Hindu devotees, but also to the local community as well. So it's part of a binding that we have within that.

Inter faith is a huge aspect of our temple's work. We have 300 children, aged 4 to 16, who come for Sunday School. Within their syllabus they learn about Hindu prayers, Hindu stories, Hindu festivals and their meanings. But we also teach them comparative religion. So, if you come to the temple on a Sunday, you will hear the children chanting a prayer from each of the major religions, for example the Lord's Prayer for the Christian faith or a prayer for the Jewish faith or the Muslim faith. They do that regularly and they chant together as a group. So, we are building up children

who can go to any place of worship and feel comfortable and feel that they can find God within that area.

The Temple represents Hinduism on the London Boroughs Faiths Network, London Borough of Merton's Faith and Belief Forum and Merton SACRE.

We need to realise that our roles within our faiths are changing. We don't have to change our core belief systems, we can stay true to what our faith is about, but the needs of our devotees are changing because they are adapting to a different environment and to different cultural issues. Our role as community leaders is to evolve with our community and to provide the resources and support that they need. Thank you.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you, Geetha, for those London-wide reflections but also for the introduction to your temple.

Question and answer session

The Revd Prebendary Michael Metcalf (National Association of SACREs): I

recognise what you say about people wanting to help when there is urgent need. Have you tapped into the formal structures that exist for civil contingencies? These try to bring together volunteers with the official emergency services so that in the event of an attack or emergency people are ready and can be relied upon to do the right thing.

Geetha Maheshwaran: LBFN leads on training and exercises for the Faith Sector Panel of London Resilience, so someone from it will always be at those meetings when they are talking about resilience or any major planning that goes on in London.

The Revd Philip Brooks (United Reformed Church in the UK): We hear a lot about the breakdown in discourse and the deterioration of that across London. Is hate crime still continuing to rise?

Geetha Maheshwaran: It's always going to be an issue but it's what we do in response

to it which is the main point. Likewise terrorism. The police have a course called Action Counters Terrorism that can be delivered in places of worship and we will be offering that in our temple. The idea of the course is to build our skills so that we don't just offer support, we can offer practical skills. The more people who are trained the better, because there is strength in numbers and strength in goodness against the negativity that is in the air. We have a nice community hall which is not consecrated so anybody can go there and, in the spirit of community, we will be offering our hall to other local places of worship who may not have those facilities, so that they can hold the course as well. The idea is to build up our local social networks. I'm part of an inter faith group which is run through the Council, Merton Faith and Belief Forum. Some of us have been friends for 20 or 30 years so we know who we need to contact if there's an emergency and how to show solidarity in the work that we do. We have to provide a positive response to negativity.

Dr Daoud (Crawley Interfaith Network): Mental health and faith is a very important issue. My understanding is that some people from faith communities don't want people in their community to know about their mental health problems. I think it's fantastic that you are able to use the facilities or confidential areas in your place of worship for the NHS to come and do that work. Could you just elaborate on that? In our group in Crawley in Sussex we are involved a lot with our local NHS.

Geetha Maheshwaran: We are part of Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network (WCEN), which is a group that has brought skills to the area of Wandsworth. Our temple is on the boundary of Merton and Wandsworth. WCEN has been given the budget to offer something called Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) in the community. As part of this, the New Testament Assembly in Tooting offers family therapy which also deals, for example, with abuse and alcoholism. They train their ministers and some of their dedicated volunteers. It's a 2 or 3 year course and they can carry on to do a Masters afterwards. It provides certification so that they can actually be counsellors, looked after by the NHS, so there is a proper solid framework. In our temple we offer IAPT, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and one to one counselling. There are a lot of doctors within our faith community but we use the local NHS mental health service because they have the budget and the right structures for safeguarding which is very important. So we use our services as a unique place where people can come and feel safe and not feel stigmatised.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you again for your presentation, Geetha. I suspect that mental health will feature again in our discussions.



LONDON

Boroughs Faiths Network

Opportunities & Challenges
Inter Faith Network for the UK
4 July 2019



1

A network of local people of faith . . .

. . . working with our local councils, NHS & police to make a positive impact on the wider community



LONDON Boroughs Faiths Network

2



LBFN brings together the borough multi-faith networks. Some are independent charities, some are supported by their local council.

FAITHS TOGETHER IN CROYDON

ENFIELD Council

Redbridge Faith Forum

HIF

ISLINGTON FAITHS FORUM

merton

City of Westminster

WCEM

HOUSLOW FRIENDS OF FAITH

3

Olympic Truce: All The Bells 2012

Film: London Is Open - Places of Worship 2016

Brexit Preparedness: 2019

Safe | Secure | Resilient

Thursday 21 March 6pm - 8pm

New Scotland Yard, Western Front, 5th & 6th

#LondonIsOpen

4



Recently, we've developed a training course to keep our places of worship

- SAFE
- SECURE
- RESILIENT

Working with the Met Police, London Resilience, British Red Cross, Tell Mama, Community Security Trust & Ecclesiastical Insurance.

LONDON Boroughs Faiths Network

5

We meet in the evenings at New Scotland Yard



LONDON Boroughs Faiths Network

6




Places of worship have assets:

- Buildings
- People
- Longevity

People want to play their part in civic society and to step up to the mark in the event of an emergency

LONDON Boroughs Faiths Network

7



The Shree Ghanapathy Temple: improving mental health at community level

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8



Public agencies have fewer resources but by working strategically, we can share our professional & community knowledge & improve services for the wider community

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LONDON

Boroughs Faiths Network

Opportunities & Challenges
Inter Faith Network for the UK
4 July 2019



10

A perspective on variety of initiatives and the importance of the involvement of faith groups

Dr Maureen Sier

Director, Interfaith Scotland and IFN Trustee

Bishop Atkinson: Our second contributor on this topic is Dr Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland, who has been an IFN Trustee for a number of years. She will be offering reflections from her perspective as Director of Interfaith Scotland with its wide-ranging work offering advice and support to 20 multi faith and local inter faith groups in Scotland from the Scottish Borders all the way to Shetland. The copy of the PowerPoint slides used during this presentation is at the end of this note.



Dr Maureen Sier

Dr Maureen Sier: Thank you. It has been a fantastic morning already. I am always overwhelmed by the incredible work that local inter faith groups do. As a national organisation in Scotland, our work would be irrelevant if it wasn't for the work of the local

inter faith groups. So, thank you for the amazing presentations.

Reflections on the morning

I was asked to offer some initial reflections on this morning. It has been an incredibly rich morning with so much to reflect on.

Harriet noted earlier the changing landscape in local inter faith engagement and the increased involvement in inter faith engagement. I'm happy to say in the last 12 years in Scotland, we have had a 75% increase in the number of local inter faith groups. That sounds very exciting but we did start from a baseline of just 4! We now have 20, so there is a continuing increase.

All the speakers this morning have emphasised that faith communities are now taking more ownership of inter faith engagement. I think that's really critical. I was reflecting on this as they were speaking about the real engagement of faith communities and faith communities seeing inter faith work as being at the heart of some of what we do. In Scotland the 20 inter faith groups probably reach around 5,000 people. But in the faith communities in Scotland there are approximately 2-3 million people. So, it's a very different framework.

When faith communities take inter faith work really seriously, then I think we will see a completely different landscape across the whole of our country. I really do think



The Revd James Breslin (IFN Trustee) and Nemu Chandaria OBE (Institute of Jainology)

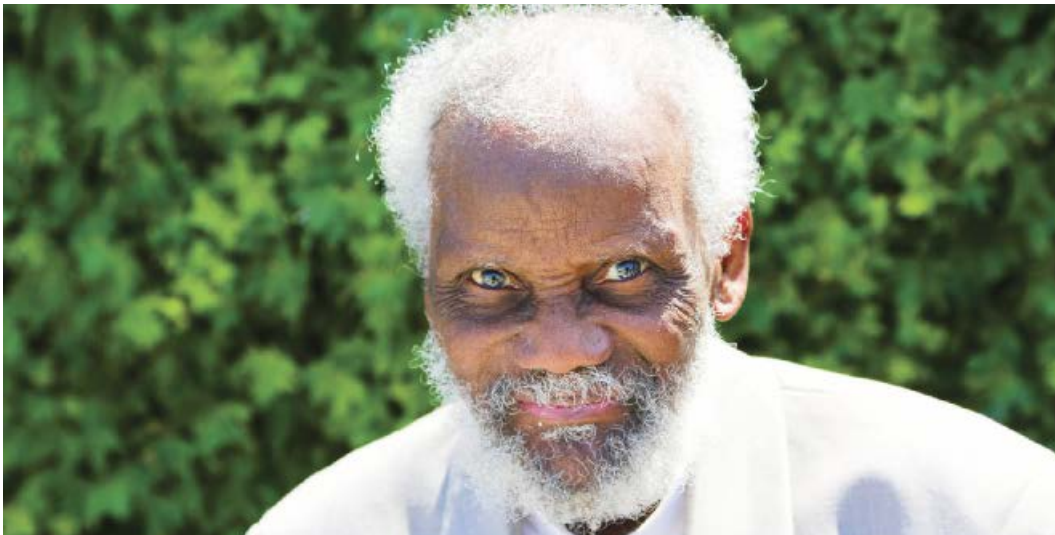
it's absolutely critical. I'll give some examples in Scotland. The Church of Scotland, which is the biggest Christian Church in Scotland, has for the last few years, employed an Inter Faith Officer whose job it is to build good relations. I was recently at the Episcopal Synod, which is a three day event held in Edinburgh for all the Scottish Episcopal Churches and I believe now also the United Reformed Church, and they were passing resolutions that inter faith work was going to be a key priority that was going to be embedded inside of their national structures. They wanted to see training for every single Scottish Episcopal church in Scotland on inter faith engagement. That is huge. When I think of our 20 local inter faith groups and how many Scottish Episcopal churches and how many Church of Scotland congregations there are in the country, it shows how seriously inter faith is being taken by faith communities. The Scottish Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interreligious Dialogue also do incredible inter faith work across Scotland. That is beginning to be reflected in non-Christian communities as well. The Scottish Ahlul-Bayt Society, for example, has made inter faith engagement the key aspect of its work. I think every faith community needs to make inter faith engagement a top priority and to work with the local inter faith groups on this.

Another recurring theme of this morning's presentations has been social action. Local

inter faith groups continue to come together for their core business of building good relations, getting to know each other and learning about one another's faiths. However, social action, where the faith communities come together to make a difference in their communities, is crucial. In Scotland we have food justice initiatives, refugee support, climate change and climate challenge initiatives, standing together in solidarity, and tackling hate crime together. As well as the social action itself, faith communities coming together is a very powerful symbol of the kind of country we all want to live in. When people see faith communities coming together for social action, they feel empowered, strengthened and comforted.

Funding has also been raised. Obviously more can be done with funding. Funding can help with meaningful social action. Many local inter faith groups don't receive any funding, relying entirely on volunteers, and this can be a struggle. In Scotland most of the social action that's having significant impact is done by the funded inter faith groups. Interfaith Scotland, Edinburgh Inter faith Association and Interfaith Glasgow are significantly funded by the Scottish Government.

Other issues mentioned so far include partnership working, leadership, education and sustainability, all of which are critical.



The Most Revd Father Olu Abiola (Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK))

Community engagement

I want to explore for a few minutes what I think is really important for local inter faith groups and that is community engagement. Local inter faith groups are not necessarily professional bodies and so sometimes just having an understanding of engaging communities can be really helpful. Slide 3 shows a number of standards for community engagement: inclusion, support, planning, working together, methods and communication.

Looking at the impact of what you are doing is very important. The big question that funders are asking now is, “We know you are coming together for dialogue but, so what?” So you have to be able to articulate why you are coming together and what impact your coming together has. For example, a small local group might say “We are making a difference to the 10 people that come together once a month and have a conversation about pilgrimage or sacred space or fasting.” But how might that conversation be having an impact on the wider community? What else are you doing? How are you engaging the community? What will you do with the wider community? How are you standing in solidarity with others when there are crises? Funders want to know these kind of things. It can, of course, be very difficult to do that when you are not getting funding.

In Scotland some of the local inter faith groups just come together for conversations. Elgin is my home town, so whenever I go home I also pop in to visit the local inter faith group. As a group they come together, they talk about different faiths, they have a good interaction and then they go home. That might seem limited but it still has its significance and they are still a symbol locally of faiths coming together as well as a place where connections are made. There was an occasion when I was coming back on the train from a visit and my sister rang me from Elgin saying that someone had graffiti’ed the one small mosque in Elgin. She said that no one knew what to do. I was able to ring the local inter faith group straight away and suggest they visit the mosque. They then visited and were shown to be standing in solidarity with the Muslim community. That was then reported in the local press and it meant that the local Muslim community felt very supported. So, suddenly, from them just coming together for conversations, the inter faith group felt that they had a really important role to play.

The same local inter faith group decided that they wanted to do something to address climate change, so they decided that they would start a grove of trees in the Highlands of Scotland through Trees for Life, which they have called the Moray Interfaith Grove. This sparked a faith

community into thinking that they could have a inter faith grove as well. So that community has now developed an inter faith grove with over 100 trees in it. That, in turn, inspired Interfaith Scotland to have a World Inter Faith Harmony Grove and have trees planted by people from faith traditions, inter faith groups and others. As you know, every tree planted takes in the nasty stuff and breaths out the good stuff and, in light of our climate emergency, it is such a simple, positive way to respond. And it was a local inter faith group that sparked the interest.

Recently a representative of Interfaith Glasgow was invited to a reception at Buckingham Palace to meet with the Queen and be honoured for the work that it does. Two of its key projects are around food justice and refugee support through its Weekend Club. I was also thrilled to see my own faith community, the Baha'i community, reflected at the reception through a friend of mine, Venus Carew, for the work she does in supporting young children through her Peacemaker Club. These are just a few examples of faith communities and inter faith groups working for the common good.

Bishop Atkinson: Maureen, thank you, it is very good to hear reflections on Scotland from your breadth of experience. As you say, the 'so what' question is vital.

Question and answer session

Sonoo Malkani (Harrow Interfaith): We did some tree planting in Harrow through the Zoroastrian community with support from the Mayor of London. I also know of a current international initiative in India where anyone can go online and dedicate a tree in the name of a loved one. I can provide the web link.

Bishop Atkinson: In regard to tree planting, Bedford has a Community Orchard developed through inter faith activity.

Trupti Patel (Hindu Forum of Britain): The Hindu Forum of Britain's Vice-President in Scotland is a young person. I will put you in

contact with him. Fantastic work is being done by both the Glasgow Hindu temple and the Edinburgh Hindu temple. Hindu temples across the country do good inter faith work and welcome in others. When you get an invitation from a local temple, please try to attend. It helps you to realise all that is going on and how welcoming the community is.

Don de Silva (Faiths Forum for London):

Thank you for the presentation. At the United Nations Environment Programme, I was involved in the first climate change expert panel meeting. It will take more than landscaping and tree planting to deal with climate change. The issues of climate change also affect poverty, justice and sustainability. We have to deal with population growth, consumption and their impact on the natural resources, which all our economies depend on. Without involving faith communities, there will never be sustainability. Please consider the wider implications of faith and the environment.

Maureen Sier: Thank you. Last week we held a dialogue event with the former Head of State of Samoa (His Highness King Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi), who is a renowned academic on climate change and climate emergency. We held the event in partnership with the University of St Andrews. Academics, Pacific Islanders, Maoris, Fijians and faith communities came together. They shared with us the indigenous approach to climate change and sustainability and the faith communities were all part and parcel of that conversation. It was an incredible event and to have the former King of the Samoan Islands as our keynote speaker was absolutely fantastic. It is the first time we've had 5,000 hits on one of our Facebook posts! At a recent away day two issues emerged that we would like to make central to our work for the next few years: the climate crisis and tackling hate together.

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you, Maureen. And thank you, Don, for reminding us of the much bigger agenda.

Community initiatives and the importance of the involvement of faith groups

Dr. Maureen Sier
Director of Interfaith Scotland

1

INITIAL REFLECTIONS



2

Seven Standards for Community Engagement



3

Working Together – Take the Leap

► <https://treesforlife.org.uk/plant-trees/grove/8922/>



4

Two Scots invited to royal reception honouring workers whose initiatives improve communities

Interfaith and faith community example of improving communities

5



ANY QUESTIONS?

6

Welcome back to plenary and Video message

Jatinder Singh Birdi

Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK



Jatinder Singh Birdi:

Welcome back. Before we begin this afternoon's session, we shall be playing a video message that we have received for today from Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Minister for Faith.

Can I thank everybody at the Network for all that you do, especially Co-Chairs the Rt Revd Richard Atkinson and Jatinder Singh Birdi and the Executive Director Harriet Crabtree. I know today's focus is on the changing face of local inter faith. During my Belief and Communities Tour I travel up and down the country and see how important that is. There are many wonderful examples where people are inspired by their faith or belief to do something above and beyond to create stronger communities.

Later today the Inter Faith Network will be launching *Inter Faith Week: Stories from 2018, Inspiration for 2019*. There were hundreds of events in 2018 bringing people together. I would encourage everybody to get involved Inter Faith Week this year in November. It provides a tremendous opportunity to highlight the contribution of faith groups to society and to encourage bridging beliefs and backgrounds in our local communities. I hope today is a very productive one. Thank you so much."

Video message

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Minister for Faith

"I'm sorry I'm not able to join you at your national annual meeting and the AGM later on, but I want to pass on my best wishes to everybody attending for a successful and productive day. Developing positive inter faith relationships with people of different faiths and beliefs is really important for our society and I wish everybody well in their discussions today. The Inter Faith Network's work to promote cooperation amongst our different faith and belief groups is vital to creating a more cohesive society. Particularly important is the way the Network helps to link initiatives and encourage mutual learning and the sharing of good practice to support and strengthen inter faith understanding.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: We are delighted that Chris Turner from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is with us today. I'm sure he will convey to Lord Bourne our gratitude for his message of support and also our gratitude for the support that we receive from Lord Bourne and from MHCLG.

Brief feedback of points from discussion groups/workshops

Jatinder Singh Birdi: I now invite the rapporteurs for each Discussion Group to come forward. Notes of key points from the Discussion Groups will be included in the National Meeting Report. For now each rapporteur will give us two key points from their group.

Discussion Group 1: Tackling social problems – working together and with statutory agencies



Patricia Stoa (Nottingham InterFaith Council): Our group heard about inter faith activities in Croydon, which is a very diverse London Borough which has all the religions you've heard about and many that you haven't! What

was impressive was the fundamental message about taking the initiative, rather than waiting for statutory agencies or other organisations to approach you. It was key, when noticing a problem, to go to the agencies and say, "We can help with this. Here is a possible route to a solution." A particular example was given of a meeting for women organised by Faiths Together in Croydon about domestic violence. About 50 people came and women officers from the local authority and other organisations came and talked about domestic violence, what your rights are and what you can do if you are a victim of domestic violence. The group took a similar approach to knife

crime. It approached the local authority and was involved in organising two meetings on knife crime, which looked at what can be done, how the issue can be approached and how the faith communities can help. The messages from the meetings were taken by participants back to their own faith communities so that a wider audience heard about the steps being taken to manage down knife crime in Croydon.

Faiths Together in Croydon was closely involved in the creation of Faith Responders, whereby each faith community has a single person who is the contact point for statutory organisations in the case of an emergency, disaster or terrorist incident. That person is contacted and then can cascade information to their faith community and they can work on an organised response. The presentation was an excellent example of how inter faith bodies locally can become involved, if they take the initiative, in tackling many aspects of the social problems which are so prevalent in our cities.

Discussion Group 2: Creative collaborations – using art and culture to stimulate inter faith understanding and to build relationships

Neil Pitchford (Druid Network): Our group watched a film made by Brighton and Hove Inter Faith Contact Group called 'Angels in the City'. The project used angels as a common point of focus for everyone from different faith communities. A lot of people had personal experience of these, some calling them angels and others not. Using arts and music is a very good way to further



Neil Pitchford

reduce barriers between people. People can be more accepting of concepts that are created through music and art than in other ways. These pictures, music and poetry brought people together at the grassroots level. It was a very good example of

grassroots level involvement achieving transformation.

Discussion Group 3: Inter faith engagement as part of the community cohesion agenda



Vinay Shah

Vinay Shah (Institute of Jainology): The group heard about the inter faith cohesion work being done by Building Bridges Pendle. For a small group they are doing a great amount of work. Some of this work is done through partnership and

they have joined with other groups and other communities to create a variety of projects, including using music and discussions. The activities have really helped to counter negativity. They are a very good example of a local inter faith group making a difference. We all agreed that we just need to take one unexpected step and a new path will open before us.

Discussion Group 4: Local inter faith engagement with environmental issues



Mohinder Singh
Chana

Mohinder Singh Chana (Network of Sikh

Organisations):

Our group had a very interesting discussion on climate change and how we can help to remedy the situation. A short presentation on tree planting relating to a climate action

project, and a presentation on the South East England Faiths Forum's work were found to be useful and encouraging. The impact of climate change is affecting the whole of humanity now. Local inter faith groups should be at the forefront of action at every single level. Think globally, act locally. The dissemination of practical solutions which an individual or community can adopt should be of benefit and help in creating sustainable lifestyles for today and future generations. One of the stumbling blocks is that everybody is not convinced we have a problem.

Discussion Group 5: Faith communities and local inter faith engagement

Dr Katherine O'Lone (Woolf Institute): One of the issues we looked at was the idea of 'levels'. How do we transmit the effects of a local inter faith initiative upwards and conversely, how do initiatives at national level play out at local level? There was a sense that there is a hidden layer of inter faith initiatives and that we need to encourage them to come together and



Dr Katherine O'Lone

register with networks like IFN that will really help facilitate this mechanism of transfer at all different levels. We also looked at whether one might develop a kind of template where we can put forward in a quantitative or bite-sized way

what the impact of our organisations actually are. This would be useful not only for the funders but also for the organisations themselves. Is there a way we could actually do this?

Discussion Group 6: Amplifying impact – maximising your local connections and highlighting your work



Charanjit AjitSingh

Charanjit AjitSingh (Hounslow Friends of Faith): We had a very interesting presentation about North Kirklees Inter Faith. We concluded that engagement with public services and young people is very important.

Also important is taking charge of news distribution – through social media, newsletters and all other means of communication. You shouldn't depend on others spreading news for you. One of the key points that arose from this was the importance of personal connections in inter faith relations.

Discussion Group 7: 'Bilateral' and 'multi faith' inter faith engagement at local level



Dr Iyadh Daoud

Dr Iyadh Daoud (Crawley Interfaith Network): We had a multilateral discussion on bilateral dialogue! Bilateral dialogue builds relationships of trust and depth. It is often our own early experience of a bilateral interaction that

creates the interest in us for pursuing inter faith engagement in the wider context, and the confidence to engage with people of other faiths and beliefs. A few people in the group talked about their early years in school, making friends with people of other faiths, which then helped them not to have any barriers in the future.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: I had the opportunity to listen to some of the discussions taking place in all the groups and they were all very interesting. I would like to thank you all for your participation and to thank the facilitators, presenters, rapporteurs and note-takers for their contributions.

Trust, mutuality and sustainability

The Revd David Herbert

Chair, Newcastle Council of Faiths

Jatinder Singh Birdi: I would now like to introduce The Reverend David Herbert, Chair of Newcastle Council of Faiths and Moderator of the Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church. He will be reflecting on how inter faith engagement evolves across the years, the importance of continuing to develop relationships of trust and mutuality and some of the ingredients that often make for sustainability and connection.



The Revd David Herbert: Thank you very much for your warm welcome, your hospitality at lunch and for the invitation to come and share a little of our journey in the North East with you this afternoon. I have been the Moderator of the Northern Synod of

the United Reformed Church for the last two and half years and for the past twelve months I have been Chair of Newcastle Council of Faiths. My predecessor was Bishop Seamus and he was the successor to Bishop Martin, so that has been the recent pattern of leadership within the Council of Faiths.

It was good to hear Kirklees mentioned just now. I grew up in Huddersfield and have great affection for the community there which is very diverse. There was also a rich

mix of communities in Huddersfield in the 60s and 70s when I was there.

Beginnings

The Newcastle Council of Faiths has got a story that goes back to the 1970s. It began with Hari Shukla. He is of small stature but with tremendous vision and a big heart for the wellbeing of the community in Tyneside. Back in the 1970s Hari was very farsighted and wise and pulled together a group of religious leaders across the city – a group that continues to meet to this day. Eventually that group saw the need to have a more formal structure and became the Newcastle Council of Faiths. A huge step forward for the Council of Faiths was the appointment by the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle of a lady called Lesley Hilary to a part time post. She is the Interfaith and Religious Minorities Relations Advisor to the Diocese, so her work is quite rich and varied. In many ways that investment, that resource, which has been sustained over a significant period to make a real difference, has been vital to the wellbeing of the Council of Faiths, so we are very grateful for that sharing of resources.

Groupings with a connection to the Council of Faiths

One thing that has happened through the years is that the Council of Faiths has evolved. The core work continues to develop. There is still also the Religious Leaders' Group and those of us who are part of that continue to meet on an informal basis and discuss in a different

environment, in a more discreet, less public environment perhaps, many of the items that are on the agenda of the Council of Faiths. Relationships are so important and there has been stability and good support sustained through the years for the Leaders' group.

Newcastle Council of Faiths also has a spin-off group that's called Voices of Faith. This publicises its own events, meets regularly and hosts public meetings where there is each time a panel of 3 speakers who talk through the lens of their respective traditions about certain themes or issues. That meets in various places around the city of Newcastle.

The 'Chain of Peace', initiated by Hari Shukla some years ago and involving the different faith communities in Newcastle, organises public events that celebrate peace and reconciliation and significant events and themes. The most significant one in my period of office took place in November and was part of the city's marking of 50 years since the death of Martin Luther King, who received an Honorary Degree from Newcastle University. I believe it is the only university in the UK to have awarded Martin Luther King an honorary degree. He came to Newcastle to receive that degree and people remember his visit with affection.

Newcastle is a fairly compact city but we have a band of diverse communities living across from east to west. In the east of the city we have Heaton Mosque which organises a peace walk each year. That is growing and the Newcastle Council of Faiths has had events at the Heaton Mosque which is very well supported by its local community.

Newcastle has a longstanding annual Peace Walk which tends to take place in the western side of Newcastle each year in mid-September.

Each of these groups has their own agenda, their own arrangements, their own energy and vision and operate independently. It could become a problem, if people were

pulling in different directions and there was no communication and coordination.

Recently Lesley Hilary and others have done some fundraising for Newcastle Council of Faiths and we've had some great success with that. One of the projects we will be doing as a result of that is holding an inter faith cricket match, building on one that was held a few years ago. My knees are knocking at the prospect of that because I haven't thrown a cricket ball or wielded a bat since I was a school boy so it sounds a bit dangerous to me! That is a project for a Men's Group. Men don't always network quite as well so it's good to have that extra funding for this project.

The Council of Faiths works in partnership with the Northumbria Police Community Engagement Team in Newcastle. Again, a lot of continuity has helped in sustaining good relations. We feel that because of the work that's being done from Hari Shukla's initiative through to now, that Newcastle as a community hasn't done that badly in comparison to other cities. It may be because of the long historical working culture of Newcastle that there's a sense of working for the common good. Ship building, deep sea fishing and mining were all dangerous jobs and there was a lot of poverty. People have historically pulled together and that's carried over to our generations today, which is a blessing I think.

We also work with Newcastle City Council through their involvement in the Newcastle Council of Faiths. In January of this year, I spent 5 days at the Centre for Mediation and Prayer adjacent to the camp at Auschwitz near Krakow in Poland. It was a 5 day study tour at which there were City Council members, along with religious leaders and other people from the Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities. It was a very powerful way of reminding ourselves of how we can work for community cohesion in our generation mindful of trends and patterns and forces that were at work back in the 1930s which might resonate with some unfortunate drifts across the globe today. So it was good to

have that joint effort which was led by Lesley on the administrative front.

The way ahead

The Council of Faiths has built or has helped support these different groupings across the city with their slightly different agendas and which meet separately. It has an overarching linking umbrella role and functions as a hub. Facilitating coordination and communication is becoming more and more important because we are better together and there is a strength in unity. Whilst there is a benefit to separate pieces of work, there is an importance to remaining connected. Our umbrella work is uppermost in my mind as the Chair thinking strategically about the immediate and the short term to medium term future of our role in the wider city community.

Spring and Autumn network meetings of all the groups who have grown from the Newcastle Council of Faiths have begun this year, with the first one held in the Spring. Despite a concern that no one would show up, it was really well supported. All the various groups came along and there was a great deal of sharing. At the end of the evening people said it had been worthwhile and wanted to do it again, so we shall continue these for the next year or so.

We also plan to continue being a one-stop shop to reach all faith communities across the city and to maintain solidarity in moments of crisis, whether that's the bombings in London, Christchurch or Sri Lanka or the shooting in Pittsburgh, with religious leaders and members of the Council of Faiths standing together shoulder to shoulder and saying "Not in our name" and "There is solidarity within our community so don't try putting any wedges between us".

We have had some very successful, well attended, popular iftars held in places of worship of three faith communities.

We know that we've come a long way together but we can never ever afford to have a hint of complacency. If we drop our guard or become complacent things can go backwards so quickly. It can take a long time to build something up; it can be given very quickly. Thank you very much.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you, David, for giving us an insight into the wonderful work that has been happening in Newcastle and of the Council of Faiths. It's great to see all the faiths working together.

Question and answer session

Rabbi Elf (Faith Network for Manchester): You spoke about the trip to Auschwitz. I believe Newcastle have done that before and the City Council were involved. Was it Thomas Cebulski that you used as a guide there? I know he did the first trip with the Newcastle Council of Faiths there and set up a Holocaust Memorial in Newcastle. *[David Herbert subsequently responded that it was a different guide].* In Manchester last year, we arranged, on behalf of the Challenging Hate Forum that was set up by the Dean of Manchester Cathedral, a trip to Krakow and Auschwitz. We had a brilliant guide. It was good to go as an inter faith group to learn about and witness to the horror of what happened, the ultimate hate and what it leads to. We are still developing what we are going to do having come back from that trip. There are obviously two great guides to use if any other inter faith groups would be interested to go.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: David, thank you very much for your presentation and I hope you will continue to do the work that you do in Newcastle for many years to come.

Newcastle Council of Faiths

Revd David Herbert
Moderator: Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church
Chair: Newcastle Council of Faiths

1

Newcastle Council of Faiths

The story so far ...

2

Hari Shukla – our beginnings in the 1970's

- A network of religious leaders takes shape
- Eventually the Newcastle Council of Faiths is formed
- Support through a part-time post funded by the Anglican Diocese

3

Spin off task groups form with slightly different agendas but in the same direction of travel

- Voices of Faith
- Chain of Peace
- Heaton Mosque Peace Walk
- Peace and Unity Group
- Newcastle Peace Walk (Friday/Saturday/Sunday mid September)
- Men's Group (interfaith cricket match – August Bank Holiday)

4

In partnership with ...

- Northumbria Police Community Engagement Team
- Newcastle City Council

5

The way ahead

- Ensure future role of Council of Faiths as overarching umbrella group facilitation co-ordination and communication
- Continue Spring and Autumn network meetings
- Promoting the Council of Faiths as a one-stop shop to reach all faith communities across the city
- Maintain solidarity events in moments of crisis
- Build on Iftars held in synagogue, mosque and cathedral
- Keep alert and never be complacent

6

Thank you for listening! 😊

7

Supporting local projects

The Revd Liz Carnelley

National Project Director, Near Neighbours

Jatinder Singh Birdi: I would now like to introduce the Revd Liz Carnelley, National Project Director of Near Neighbours, a programme of the Church Urban Fund, supported by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which has for some years provided grants and offered support to a wide range of inter faith projects in a number of areas of England. Liz will be giving some examples and reflecting on how she believes such programmes and small grants can bring benefit and how short term projects can bear long term fruit.



The Revd Liz Carnelley

The Revd Liz Carnelley: Thank you very much for inviting me. I would like to talk for a few minutes about Near Neighbours, what we do and how we work and then give some examples of some projects we

have supported and show you a short video. There is a Near Neighbours stall at the back of the room so there are lots of leaflets you can take away with you. My colleague, Gillian Bull Mott, is also here and will be able to answer your questions.

Introduction

Near Neighbours was set up in 2011. Most of our funding comes from MHCLG but we also have some funding from the Church Urban Fund. We are a Christian foundation but our staff and our partners are of all faiths and of no faith.

Our aim is to bring people together of different backgrounds in local communities to change their neighbourhoods for the better. That is done in lots of different kinds of ways. We don't tell people what they should do. We just let them bring forward their ideas and we try and help them develop them.

Areas of work

We have a number of different strands to our work. The Small Grants strand is probably the area of work that we are most known for. Through this we give money to small groups who want to do something positive in their community. That might be an environmental project or a mental health project or it might be bringing together young people to play basketball. It can be anything at all so long as it is local, brings people together from different backgrounds and builds relationships of trust which there might be some chance of being sustained beyond what we fund. We work across 10 areas of England: Birmingham, Black Country, East London, East Midlands, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Luton, Peterborough, West London and West Yorkshire. From 2011 to 2017 we gave over £5 million in grants. That equates to a lot of small grants for a lot of small groups. Of those projects, 7 out of 10 were bringing together people from more than 4 faiths or backgrounds.

In each of the 10 geographical hubs where we work, we have a local coordinator. We have local partners that we fund to employ someone in that role and their job is to build networks, create links between groups, help people to apply for grants and also support training opportunities,

whether that's confidence-building for women, or our young leaders' programme or bringing faith leaders together to meet one another and begin work together.

We also work with some national partners for our faith leader training. We work with the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), giving them some funding, particularly for their Rabbi-Clergy Action Network and the work that they do training student leaders. We work with the Christian Muslim Forum (CMF), supporting their twinning programme. Siriol Davies is here today from CMF and can tell you more about this. We also work with a group called Nisa-Nashim, which is a Jewish-Muslim women's network.

A strand of work that we have recently started is called Community Conversations. This is about encouraging people in local areas to come together in their neighbourhoods to talk about issues that affect them in their communities. We hope that out of this will come ideas for what local people can do to tackle some of those issues.

We are also supporting a movement called Places of Welcome. This is where someone sets up a drop-in, for example at a community centre, a place of worship, a library or a care home, where people can come in, feel welcome, receive free refreshments, have a chat and find comfort, conversation and signposting to resources. The movement started with involvement from Near Neighbours in Birmingham and has now spread to a number of different places. There are now about 350 of these in the country.

Our ethos

The ethos of Near Neighbours is very important. We always try to work with the ideas that local people have and to support them in realising those. We don't come in saying "We've got all the answers. We're going to do it all." We would rather say, "What are you doing in your community? How can we help you?" That's our approach. It's about building relationships.

A speaker earlier today said that one of the most important parts of inter faith work is partnership and that's really key to what we do in Near Neighbours. We're all about partnership, working with different groups, helping, supporting and developing.

Examples of support

Now I would like to give you some examples of a few of the people that we've worked with and what's happened to them.

Madir is a Hindu woman in Smethwick. Part of her interest was in gathering women together. We supported her about 5 years ago to gather a group together in Smethwick called Women First. They began to meet together for friendship and food and activities. The group is still going now.

Adam and Heston met on our Catalyst youth training programme in Leeds. Adam is Muslim and was only about 17 when he did the Catalyst programme. Heston is a young priest in the Church of England and he was in his 20s. They started doing activities together, including school assemblies. They became good friends and met for meals and are continuing to do lots of activities in Leeds. Adam recently spoke at a CCJ event about Antisemitism and Islamophobia at a mosque in Leeds that Near Neighbours was supporting. Heston has been involved in organising an iftar between a church, mosque and synagogue.

Sanjeev is involved in a gurdwara in Luton. We funded the gurdwara to run a cooking project in partnership with the Luton Irish Forum. They came together to learn about langar meals and about some of the food prepared in the gurdwara. Out of that came a really strong partnership and the gurdwara was part of the St Patrick's Day procession. The partnership also led to some conversations, as part of our Community Conversations programme, with the Irish Forum, Mary Seacole Housing and some people from the Red Cross. That partnership continues to grow and its reach continues to spread.

The importance of the work

I am aware that this work all sounds very soft, and very lovely and nice, but you know and I know, that this work is incredibly difficult. It takes an awfully long time and a lot of hard work to build trust. It is very important work because it is about building what the Government calls 'resilient communities', communities that can withstand testing times and come together. Creating these very strong networks across faith and across ethnicity can build trust and take communities forward. We do live, unfortunately, in a time when hate crime and prejudice are all around us. Building trust and building friendships sounds soft and trivial but it is really important for strong communities and strong relationships.

There's a Christian parable about a man who sold everything he had to buy a pearl of great price. In a way I think that's what we're doing, because the sort of work we're engaged in is very often about hard work, sacrifice and risk. But when we do that, then we find the treasure.

Ms Carnelley then showed a film about the work of Near Neighbours, which can be found at www.near-neighbours.org.uk/about.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you, Liz, for that presentation. It's great to see some of the projects that are being supported through Near Neighbours and the excellent work being done at grassroots level.

Question and answer session

Julie Jones (Inter-faith Council for Wales): I was very impressed by your presentation. Is there a way that we can connect with you? I know that Near Neighbours only works in certain areas but is there a way that we can have your contact details and find out more about the funding and projects?

Liz Carnelley: Yes, there is lots of information about our work on our stall at the back of the room, so you can take some

information and resources with you. We also have a website at www.near-neighbours.org.uk which has a lot of free downloadable resources, such as 'How do you apply for funding?', 'How do you run a project?', 'How do you think about your budget?', 'How do you manage volunteers?' There are also places on the website to learn more about the ways in which we have managed to connect people and support them to build friendships which become sustainable. Sustainability is important because funding cannot last forever. Near Neighbours itself is only funded year on year and there is no guarantee how long its funding will last.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: IFN also provides information about the Near Neighbours Small Grants programme in its e-bulletins.

Madhu Kans (North Kent Inter Faith Relations Council): What is the youngest age group that you can support? Do you support projects for children as young as 10 or 5?

Liz Carnelley: We are able to support projects for people of any age but they need to be in one of the 10 areas of the country that I mentioned earlier (Birmingham, Black Country, East London, East Midlands, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Luton, Peterborough, West London and West Yorkshire). We have funded programmes of baby and parent activities and also funded projects for older people. It's just about people coming forward with good ideas.

Inter Faith Week – launch of the 2019 week programme

Julie Jones

Vice-Chair, Inter-faith Council for Wales

Jatinder Singh Birdi: As you have heard, there was a lot of great work during Inter Faith Week 2018 and a lot of activities took place throughout the country. I would now like to introduce Julie Jones, who is Vice-Chair of the Inter-faith Council for Wales and also a fellow IFN Trustee. She will be talking about the platform that Inter Faith Week offers for increasing inter faith understanding, cooperation and religious literacy.



Julie Jones

Julie Jones: It is a privilege to stand before you today. We will shortly be launching Inter Faith Week, but before I talk about the 2018 and 2019 Weeks I would like to give you a little background.

Throughout Inter Faith Week people witness rooms

filled like this at events held by many different organisations, where the good that we do unites more than divides, and new bridges of understanding are built. Thousands of people, many of whom have never had the opportunity for inter faith encounter, see the good works, join in and celebrate. It is a time, a week, of doing, after many weeks of talking, planning and collaborating.

Inter Faith Week increases public awareness of the diverse faith communities

in the UK, and celebrates their contribution to society. A friend of mine, who is a Moderator on IFN's Faith Communities Forum said to me this week, with regard to inter faith work, "When we work together, we shine brighter, reach further and build unity". Inter Faith Week does just that.

Inter Faith Week began in 2009. 2019 is therefore the 10th anniversary and that is why this year, for the first time in a number of years, IFN has produced a printed edition of a booklet which reports on the Week and encourages people to take part in this year's one. Please do take copies of the booklet to share with others.

Inter Faith Week was inspired by Scottish Inter Faith Week which is led by Interfaith Scotland, whose Director, Dr Maureen Sier, you heard speaking earlier today. I encourage you to meet her. She truly is an inspiration to all who meet her and I can honestly say that I am a better person for knowing her. Inter Faith Week began with the encouragement from a Scottish Sikh, Ravinder Kaur Nijjar who was, at the time, an IFN Trustee.

The first Inter Faith Week was held by IFN in partnership with the UK government and the then Department for Communities and Local Government (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)). MHCLG provides support towards the work of the Inter Faith Network which helps enable the Week. To all those involved at MHCLG and the Minister for Faith, Lord Bourne of

Aberystwyth, we are grateful for all your support and encouragement.

When we look at history for a moment, at various times there have been what we would refer to as 'religious revivals'. I think Inter Faith Week 2018/19 can also be a time of revival. Let me share why I am brave enough to say that.

In the last 5 years inter faith activities during the Week went from 416 events to a reported 760 in 2018. In the past 5 years an extra 315 organisations have participated in the Week. Social media coverage was extensive with an enormous reach and we are grateful to IFN for their social media work. Without social media this surge of activity wouldn't have happened. I encourage all of you to use it to gain the successes you desire. If you are not sure how to use it, ask someone to help you.

Youth inter faith engagement was high and, as the report shows, there was a significant growth in social action activities in the 2018 week. These activities included ones held for both Inter Faith Week and Mitzvah day. IFN has had a very positive working relationship with Mitzvah Day and for the staff here today from Mitzvah Day we thank you for all the help and support we receive from you and wish you well with your Day this year.

Increasingly, as we work and serve together, we will set an example that each belief is valued. Sitting side by side, walking, talking, sharing together, we help counteract all the negative messages with new hopeful ones. I would like to share an example with you of how Inter Faith Week has had a positive impact.

Until 2018 the Inter-faith Council for Wales had to finance its own events. However, in 2018 we decided to 'go big'. We wrote to the Welsh Government and asked them to participate and contribute to an event that we organised during Inter Faith Week. To our delight they accepted and offered to support it with a £1,000 contribution. Assembly Member Julie James, Leader of the House, attended and spoke,

Government officials walked with us, holding lanterns, along the streets of Cardiff and it was a very successful day. This year the Welsh Government has already approached us with a proposal of turning this into an annual event. In 2018 about 60 people attended. This year the committee has decided to hold a different type of event with an inter faith choir and already 70 people have joined the choir and started rehearsing!

I can testify that when we work together, organise events together and advertise on social media, people will see our good works and see that we shine brighter, reach further and build unity.

The Co-Chairs have highlighted an amazing array of activities during 2018. Thousands of people of different backgrounds came together to volunteer, arrange events, including talks, learning, sports activities, food events, music events, visits to places of worship and exploration trails – you name it, we did it! This year we will do more.

Before I hand back to the Co-Chairs who will formally launch both the report and the 2019 programme, can I say that your good works are noticed. It shows in your countenance what you do and it is a privilege to be amongst those today who share the same values.

On behalf of everyone here can I thank the IFN staff for all the work and assistance they provide us all to make the Week possible. Together let us reach further, aim higher and shine brighter.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you, Julie, for those inspiring words and for all that you do.

Launch of *Inter Faith Week: Stories from 2018, Inspiration for 2019*

Jatinder Singh Birdi: We shall now launch *Inter Faith Week: Stories from 2018, Inspiration for 2019*.

Before we do so, I would like to say how pleased we are to have with us today Debbie Drapkin, Senior Projects and Partnerships Manager at Mitzvah Day and Josephine Davidoff, its Project Coordinator. IFN has a close working relationship with Mitzvah Day which usually takes place at the beginning or end of Inter Faith Week, with many activities held both for the Week and Mitzvah Day. It is a very good example of partnership working in action.

We are now very pleased to hear from Trupti Patel of the Hindu Forum of Britain, Cllr Tom Aditya of Bristol Multi Faith Forum,

Sheikh Irfan Soni of North Kirklees Inter Faith and also a teacher; and Dr Norman Richardson of the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum.

Trupti Patel President, Hindu Forum of Britain

Trupti Patel: Namaste. I remember the first Inter Faith Week, 10 years ago, when I was working in Oldham. It was absolutely amazing. We held an event with faith leaders from all the local communities. Local inter faith celebration events are very important. Families and festivals are the means to organise those. As we all know,



Sheikh Irfan Soni, Trupti Patel, Cllr Tom Aditya, Dr Norman Richardson MBE and Julie Jones



The Revd Liz Carnelley (Near Neighbours) and Rabbi Maurice Michaels (IFN Honorary Treasurer)

women play a large part in this and it is always good to invite along women and children to events. Creating inter-generational projects is a good idea – you can involve very young children all the way up to grandparents in their 70s and 80s. Near Neighbours can always be approached for funding if you are in England!

Cllr Tom Aditya Chair, Bristol Multi-Faith Forum

Cllr Tom Aditya: Bristol Multi-Faith Forum was started in 2004. It was started by the Bristol City Council itself as a collective voice of the faith communities, but also for the inter faith and inter cultural dimension and social harmony. In order to create this we have tried to promote health and wellbeing in all communities. In Bristol we have had Diverse Doors Open Days every year for many years. We also have Faith Walks between different places of worship. We also carry out social action projects. During Inter Faith in 2018 we hosted the Love Your Neighbour Awards ceremony. The categories included: Promoting inclusion, Improving access to services, Health and wellbeing, Peace and

reconciliation, Faith and creative arts and Youth and Interfaith relations. It was a big success. It was held at the Bristol Rovers Football Club in the the Memorial Stadium and the Football Club was one of the event partners. It was also attended by the West of England Combined Authority Mayor and the Deputy Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police. It was a celebration of all the voluntary organisations in that area. It helped to make people aware of the work of the Forum. We are now harnessing that goodwill and furthering and sustaining the Forum's reputation. For the Forum Inter Faith Week helps to strengthen inter faith relations at all levels and enables us to create more of an awareness of faith communities.

Sheikh Irfan Soni Islamic scholar, Teacher and Co-Vice Chairman, North Kirklees Inter Faith

Sheikh Irfan Soni: North Kirklees, for those who don't know, is in West Yorkshire. North Kirklees Inter Faith was started just over 2 years ago. In 2018 we did a lot of Inter Faith Week activities. You will probably have noticed that my photo is on this year's flyer and poster! That was taken when we were giving out 'roses for peace'. It was an idea that someone had suggested to us. The two main towns in North Kirklees are Batley and Dewsbury, so we decided to give out our roses in these two towns. On the Wednesday it was market day in Dewsbury so we thought it would be a good day to give out the roses, so members of North Kirklees Inter Faith went down to the town centre on a Wednesday to give roses out. There was a little message from the Bible ('Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you') and from the Quran ('Peace be upon you') with each one, because the community is mostly Christian and Muslim. On the Saturday I went with the Revd Mark Umpleby and gave out roses outside Tesco. On both the days, people asked us questions about why we were doing it so it gave us the opportunity to explain about



Malcolm Deboo (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe)

Inter Faith Week. We also went into schools together to do assemblies and answer questions in the classrooms. We told the schools that we would like to do this during Inter Faith Week specifically. We had a good response rate and visited 5 or 6 local schools. We talked about our friendship and our commonalities and how important it is to bring people of different faiths together. In Batley we also have a group called the Batley Poets and they hold an event every year during Inter Faith Week. A staff member from the IFN office came to their event last year. In our community we have seen a big difference due to the inter faith work that is taking place.

Dr Norman Richardson MBE Secretary, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum

Dr Norman Richardson: My colleague, Mr Ed Petersen, who was due to be speaking today, unexpectedly had to send his apologies and I am speaking in his place. In Northern Ireland inter faith work is increasingly important for us, not least because still, for many people there, the concept of inter faith relationships beyond

inter-Christian relationships is still quite new and tricky. So, it is really important for us when we can find a time to focus on it. In previous years we have tried to raise civic awareness of inter faith work by holding meetings with the Belfast Lord Mayor and holding events at Stormont. We have also set up joint meetings with the local branch of the Council of Christians and Jews. That has led to valuable links and relationships between the local rabbi and imam and also created links in new areas. Inter Faith Week has provided an important opportunity. We have focused on issues, such as human rights and the environment. This year we hope to focus on schools and education. We are hoping to encourage schools to get involved and to give them ideas for participation, both teachers and pupils, and also ideas for setting up new groups. We hope that through Inter Faith Week we can continue to develop understanding and relationships.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you to all our speakers for their insights and for joining us in launching *Inter Faith Week: Stories from 2018, Inspiration for 2019*.

Closing reflections and thanks

Jatinder Singh Birdi and the Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE

Co-Chairs, The Inter Faith Network for the UK

Jatinder Singh Birdi: As you know, I am IFN's Co-Chair drawn from the local inter faith organisations category of membership. So I was delighted when the Board decided that the theme for this year's National Meeting would be the work of local inter faith organisations.

Local inter faith organisations do a phenomenal amount of work at grassroots level, especially practical work in communities. Without them society would be much worse off. There are a lot of unsung heroes – people who don't do it for glory, but just do it because they care about the environment and society. There are a number of factors in our current climate that are making it more and more difficult for small local voluntary organisations, such as local inter faith groups, to carry out all the work that they would wish. Despite this, they are still doing it. They are the backbone of society.

We have heard throughout today that faith groups need to evolve to respond to the changing environment in which we live. Social media is just one of the major factors that have to be taken into account.

Our young people are so very important. We must listen to them, treat them with respect and involve them in decisions, because, ultimately, what we do today is what is going to affect their future. We need to bring them on board and understand how they want to be involved and what they want to do. For example, lots of young people are keen to take action rather than to just talk.

I was privileged a few weeks ago to attend the International Conference on Cohesive Societies in Singapore. 40 countries were represented at the Conference and the King of Jordan was a keynote speaker so it was quite a high profile government event. It is important to talk locally and nationally and



The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE and Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chairs, The Inter Faith Network for the UK



The Revd Simon Cash and Sheikh Irfan Soni (North Kirklees Inter Faith)

it is also important to talk internationally to share and learn from one another. I was able to give a copy of *Connect: a youth inter faith action guide* to Singapore's Minister of Culture, Communities and Youth. She was very impressed with the guide and was also impressed to hear about Inter Faith Week.

Inter Faith Week has just been talked about. For many of us inter faith activity is an everyday part of our lives, not just one week each year, but it is very important for it to have an emphasis and focus for a Week.

It has been an honour to be with you all today. It's been thoroughly enjoyable. I hope you have all enjoyed the day as well. I would like to offer the Inter Faith Network's thanks to all the speakers, presenters, discussion group facilitators and rapporteurs who have contributed and also to our photographer, Paresh Solanki, and to the staff here at the Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre. I would also like to thank all of you for attending today's meeting and other IFN events. Thank you also to my fellow Officers and Trustees for all their work and support and to the IFN staff for the hard work that has gone on behind the scenes in putting together today's event and for all that they do throughout the year.

Finally, I would like to say a very big thank you to Bishop Richard Atkinson who, as you know, will be standing down as Co-Chair of

IFN at the AGM in a moment. From a personal point of view it has been an honour working with him and learning from him and his experiences. He will be greatly missed. The time and dedication that he has given to IFN across the last 5 years has been invaluable. *The meeting gave a round of applause.*

Bishop Atkinson: Thank you. I know that we don't have much time so I shall speak only briefly.

We talked this morning, among other things, about funding and we have talked about various aspects of how we work. However, whatever happens going forward, let's not get caught in the detail or over-focused on funding (important though that is in some contexts). In our work as inter faith organisations and as individuals committed to our faith traditions, what really matters is vision and impact and the spiritual gifts that we bring. Our traditions are different and distinctive but we share so much. Let's keep the vision high, so that we can answer those 'So what' questions and the questions about what sort of society we want to symbolise. Humanity is poor indeed without the gifts of its faith communities.

Jatinder Singh Birdi: Thank you, Bishop Richard. For those of you not staying for the AGM, I wish you a very safe journey.

Discussion group notes

Note: The discussion points listed in each of these notes are points and suggestions made by individual participants during the sessions rather than conclusions agreed by the discussion group as a whole.

Discussion Group 1: Tackling social problems and working with statutory agencies

Facilitator: Malcolm Deboo, President,
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Presenter: Penny Smith-Orr, Faiths
Together in Croydon

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Mr Malcolm Deboo welcomed participants to the discussion group and **Ms Penny Smith-Orr** delivered her presentation on the work of Faiths Together in Croydon (FTIC). A copy of her PowerPoint slides is included at the end of this note and a summary of her points is below.

Background

- I am Chair of FTIC and also a Religious Education Consultant in 5 local authorities.
- Croydon is a very diverse part of London, with a population comprising 54% Christian; 19% of no religion; 8% Hindus; 8% Muslims; and Buddhists, Sikhs and Jews constituting the remainder.
- FTIC established itself properly as an organisation in 2007 after a pledge was signed by all the faith leaders in the community.
- Members of FTIC often do not talk about their own personal faiths. There is recognition that everyone is committed to their own faith and that the forum is an avenue for those interested in action.

Working with statutory bodies

- FTIC has a community co-ordinator on their committee. The community coordinator acts as a representative of the local council and often asks FTIC to be a faith presence at local council events.
- FTIC helped the council develop their Croydon Vision project by encouraging voices from different faith communities to contribute to the strategy plan. They did this by encouraging a number of places of worship to hold 'vision events', which ensured that the diverse community of Croydon and its faith groups had a say. This consultation was a considered a "turning point" for their inter faith group, as it demonstrated their importance and ability to mobilise.
- FTIC has a quarterly newsletter that goes out to a large number of people in their local community. They have now amassed a significant enough audience such that different organisations, not all faith-based, wish to put news items in it. The local authority and police reach out often to ask to have news items included in the newsletter, as it is a way they can engage with a wider audience and relay any important information.
- Lots of people from faith communities in Croydon, particularly Muslim and Hindu women, do not engage often with local council initiatives but do engage with events outside the council. FTIC therefore tries its best to cater to everyone, and seeks to host events in spaces in which women of all backgrounds feel comfortable.



Penny Smith-Orr (Faiths Together in Croydon), Lynne Broadbent (Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action) and Kawser Akhtar (South East England Faiths Forum)

Funding

- The starting point for FTIC was a grant given by the Church, and then subsequent funding was secured from the local council each year. For the past three years however, funding has fallen.
- The local council and police contact the group extensively for consultation and support, and as a result, FTIC is hopeful that future funding will be forthcoming.
- Croydon Voluntary Action, an umbrella organisation for local community groups, has an employed clerk who manages the accounts for this funding on behalf of the group.
- FTIC has not been formalised as an organisation. It has proved complicated to formalise and establish a constitution and FTIC has prioritised getting on with important work that can make positive changes locally.
- There are programmes such as feeding the homeless and a soup kitchen at Christmas which the group also support.
- The domestic violence incident rate is high in Croydon. The local council approached FTIC and asked if they could propose an intervention to reduce this rate. So FTIC organised an event where 50 women of various faiths attended. There were presentations by a female Islamic scholar and female vicar on anti-violence and how to recognise domestic violence. Because it was a women-only event, the Muslim women who usually wear the niqab felt comfortable taking off their veil. This was an eye-opener for some present.
- Every year for the past five years there has been an inter faith bike ride and picnic. The cycling group stops off at a number of local places of worship on their way to the picnic. This year, there was a van accompanying the group with 'Interfaith bike ride' written on it, to make drivers aware and to also promote the initiative.

Events and initiatives

- FTIC holds at least four events a year and also supports many events put on by the faith communities themselves.
- There is an annual 'Big Lunch' held around the country. The date has coincided with Ramadan in the last few years. FTIC campaigned to have it changed to accommodate the local Muslim community.

- Seventh-Day Adventists have sent a representative to join FTIC's steering board this year.

Police liaison

- FTIC meet with the Police and faith leaders at the Police Station every so often.
- Croydon was one of the first boroughs to have a Faith Liaison Officer.
- They have been able to link the police to potential faith responders.
- 'Faith Responders' is an initiative where there is one designated individual from each place of worship who can be contacted to deal with 'civil contingencies' (incidents such as natural disasters or terror attacks). It makes it easier for the police to access places of worship and have a key contact.
- 'Protect your Place of Worship' is a new initiative by the local police that FTIC encourages members of local faith communities to attend.
- The Counter Terrorism Protect Officer puts on regular ACT (Action Counter Terrorism) events in Croydon.

Knife crime

- FTIC held an event on Knife-Crime in July 2018 titled 'What is being done on Knife Crime?' This event gave people and families a space to discuss ideas and solutions to the crisis. The local Police Chief gave a presentation at the event detailing what measures were being taken to reduce knife crime.
- FTIC held a follow up event held in February 2019 on what had happened since July 2018. A member of the violence reduction scheme was in attendance. This was to emphasise that events were not simply one-off occasions, and that the community would seek to hold the police accountable to their aims.

- Both events had testimonies from mothers who had lost children to knife crime and at the first event there was also a moving talk from the director of a cemetery on how it is not just the immediate family who is hurt.
- At both events there was Council representation and a local Police Inspector spoke at both. In the summer knife crime had gone down by 17% and 6 months later it had gone down further. He urged everyone to go out and talk about knife crime and not to keep quiet.
- The community co-ordinator attended and launched a campaign against knife crime, seeking the support of business pledges. Groups of faith communities are going on walks with police to complete 'weapon sweeps'.
- Such events often include attendance from police and other local community groups that FTIC has built partnerships with (eg BME Forum).

Mr Malcom Deboo thanked Ms Penny Smith-Orr for her presentation and invited questions and comments. The following points were made in the discussion:

- The Chair of the Harrow Interfaith earlier in the day said that Harrow is the most religiously diverse borough in the country, and in Europe. This can be challenged – this presentation highlighted that Croydon also has great diversity.
- Leicester is the most religiously diverse city in the UK.
- To organise inter faith activity on a very large scale you need a dedicated number of people with time to engage. The number of proactive individuals within a group is also very important. Often, the bulk of work falls onto a small number of individuals, with limited time.
- There are over 20 people on the steering committee of FTIC but not all attend every meeting. The Chair and Vice-Chair

put in significant amounts of time, with the rest contributing to events as and when they can. There are a number of annual events that all contribute too. The key point is that as a steering group they will relay important information back to their respective communities. It is all voluntary – the only paid individual is the Croydon Voluntary Action clerk who takes minutes and produces the newsletter.

- The most effective way to encourage statutory bodies to work with local inter faith groups is for the latter to formalise their structures, and to invoke the Public Sector Equality Duty. Local authorities have a duty to reduce the inequality faced by those listed under groups or individuals with protected characteristics, and also have a duty to

encourage positive relations between different communities.

- Hate crimes are underreported – a small survey conducted on faith communities in Hillingdon drew three conclusions on why people do not report hate crimes. The first reason is the perception that nothing will be done as a result, the second that reporting hate crimes could cause even more trouble, and the third that hate crimes are seen as a reality that communities have simply to accept. One measure taken as a result of the survey was that each place of worship was asked to put forward two people (one female minimum) to find out what support is available for hate crime/abuse victims, so that they can advise victims of their community on actions to take.

Tackling social problems – working together and with statutory agencies

Faiths Together in Croydon
Penny smith-Orr

1

The Borough of Croydon is one of the most diverse of the London boroughs in terms of the number of faith communities and has the largest number of people with an active religious faith.

It is vital that these different communities develop links and engage in creative dialogue to enable them to be part of a well-resourced network of faith communities that can support each other and influence public policy.

It is equally important to promote knowledge, respect, and understanding within the wider community.

2

Our three key objectives are ·

1. To develop liaison and understanding between, and outside, the faith communities of Croydon·
2. To work with the Boroughs residents, statutory authorities, private and voluntary sector in a common effort to improve the condition of life for people in the area.
3. To provide forums where faith communities, their organisations and their leaders can engage in dialogue and exchange information on ways in which to develop social inclusion

3

Regular bi-monthly steering group meetings create the opportunity for faith group representatives to engage in dialogue and collaborate in defining our programme of activities.

Our quarterly newsletter informs and stimulates our broader network and also carries news and events independent of FTiC to promote awareness, increase participation and encourage others to organise their own events with our support.

4

Support from statutory agencies!

The Council -

Funding

Sharon Kilborne - Community Coordinator, Counter Extremism Policy & Communities

Croydon Vision

5

Domestic violence

- Female Scholar and female Vicar
- Council officers from the domestic violence team

6

The annual bike ride and picnic

- Shujah Iqbal - Senior Voluntary & Community Sector Officer and Chair of Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network

2015 First interfaith bike ride in this country and possibly the world

Council support in form of funding/ healthy heart town/ spacehive

Faith groups input

This year thirty riders and 200 at the picnic

7

8

The Police -Faith liaison officer

- We were one of the first boroughs to get a faith liaison officer and are now on the third one.
- Faith Responders
- Protect Your Place of Worship
- ACT awareness raising

9

Issues for Croydon – Knife crime

WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT KNIFE CRIME?

ISSUES FOR CROYDON

COME AND JOIN THE DISCUSSION

17TH JULY 2018
6.00-8.00PM
THE BRAITHWAITE HALL
KATHARINE STREET
CROYDON CR0 1NX

There will be presentations from the Police and Council in Croydon outlining their responses to the current state of knife crime. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss how we can work together to find a solution to this problem.

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Knife crime part 2

Issues for Croydon

What is being done about knife crime? Part 2

come and join the continuing discussion

28 February 2018. 6.00pm - 8.00pm

The Braithwaite Hall, Katharine Street

Croydon CR0 1NX

Part 2: what has happened since July?

There will be presentations from the Police and Croydon Council outlining their continued response to the current state of knife crime.

What has your group or community organisation been doing?

come and join the action against knife crime

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Issues for Croydon- Knife crime part 1 and 2

First event

Testimony: Andrew Brown Chair of BME forum

Donna Murray-Turner Co-founder of Another Night of Sisterhood

Eternal gardens

Victim Support

Presentation by the Police

Presentation by the Council

12

Second event

Jonathon Toy –Violence Reduction unit, Community Safety team

Inspector Craig Knight

Tracey Ford from the Jags Foundation

13

Discussion Group 2: Creative collaborations – using arts and culture to stimulate inter faith understanding and build relationships

Facilitator: Jo Backus, Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK) and IFN Trustee

Presenters: Charlotte Gravestock, Secretary, Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group, and Sarah West, filmmaker

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Ms Jo Backus welcomed participants to the discussion group.

Ms Charlotte Gravestock offered her presentation. A summary of her points is below.

- Brighton and Hove is religiously quite diverse. The main faiths are represented, including some lesser-known ones, such as the Brahma Kumaris. It has 3 or 4 mosques and several synagogues – with one of the largest Jewish populations outside London.
- Brighton and Hove is also diverse in other ways. The South Coast is a place where people go to retire so there are a lot of elderly people. There are two universities in the city so there are also a lot of young people. There are lots of families and children. There is also a large LGBTQ community in the city.
- Brighton and Hove is a City of Sanctuary which means that it has signed up with Brighton & Hove City Council to look after the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants. So there is quite a large population of refugees and asylum seekers.
- There are a lot of language students who visit the town to attend language schools there.
- The city is also mixed economically. Parts are quite wealthy, but there are also great pockets of deprivation.
- Despite it being religiously diverse, Brighton is also the city with the largest proportion of people recorded in the Census as not having any religious affiliation. It is therefore also quite secular. Perhaps because of that, Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group (IFCG) has found that if it holds events of a specific inter faith nature, perhaps on a religious theme, the number of people who attend is fairly small, up to 25–30.
- BHICG runs a monthly prayer hour. This began in one of the Christian churches, ran for a year there, then moved to the Baha'i Centre for another year and will shortly be moving to one of the synagogues. About 8–10 people attend this each month.
- If IFCG organises a prayer vigil following, for example, a terrorist attack, then there are often more than 60 people attending.
- There are also usually a lot of attendees at the Annual Interfaith Service in November, around Inter Faith Week. About 200 people come to that of all ages and backgrounds and participation is growing each year.
- Using broad topics that affect everyone is a much better way of getting people to engage with faith communities.
- IFCG applied to the Home Office Building a Stronger Britain Together fund to make a film about its Angels in Our City project. The fund offered in-kind support, such as IT or a poster design, or a direct grant. The latter was harder to get but IFCG felt that it was important that the film was made by a local person who knew the community, understood the aims and way of working of the IFCG, knew the physical geography of Brighton, knew about the local street art and knew about the Peace Statue of an angel. IFCG therefore applied for and received a

- direct grant and Sarah West, a local filmmaker, made the film.
- IFCG has to justify the use of the grant and therefore has to evaluate the film. It would be helpful if participants could fill out a very short evaluation form about the film after they have seen it.
 - The opportunity for inter faith dialogue came out in the production of short booklets about angels in different faith traditions, written by members of the IFCG. (Copies of the booklets were handed out to participants.)

Ms Gravestock then showed the film about the Angels in Our City project, which can be found at youtu.be/nMdPr6Ctxzc or on the IFCG website at www.interfaithcontactgroup.com.

Ms Gravestock and Ms West offered the further following points:

- Brighton has a few angel statues so they are already part of the fabric of the city.
- The RE teacher in the film was from a local junior school, who had contacted IFCG about doing some inter faith work in the school. IFCG had introduced the idea of the angel project to her and she had been very enthusiastic and incorporated it into her lessons. Teachers are often looking for ideas.
- The local library and the museum were very helpful. The library put together a collection of rare books which featured angels from different periods and traditions. The museum put together a trail of objects and artefacts relating to angels. Both were pleased to have the opportunity to be involved and they each have a high footfall so it helped to spread information about the project.
- Films are a good platform for showing the work that you do. They can be more interesting to people than just reports and photos. They are easy to make, even just on your smartphone. You don't need a lot of expensive equipment.

- The film has helped IFCG to get funding for its next project which is on 'The Tree of Life', which has both faith and environmental aspects. It has received funding from the National Lottery Awards for All to make another film.

Ms Backus said that there was a lot of comment in the film about how grassroots dialogue is relational and transformative. Is that what IFCG would like people to take away from the film? **Ms Gravestock** agreed that it was. She noted that people who are senior representatives of their faith can sometimes have their hands tied when it comes to inter faith dialogue, because they feel they have to 'tow a line', and to represent certain ideas and practices. Ordinary people have more freedom to speak about their personal beliefs.

Ms Backus thanked Ms Gravestock and Ms West for their presentation and the very interesting film. In discussion the following points were made:

The power of the arts

- The project looks excellent. It is a good way of giving school children a sense of community. It is important that they learn these ideas at a young age.
- What a great idea for a project. It lends itself to inter faith dialogue and discussion and the visual arts are a great way to include everyone.
- Congratulations. The film flowed well and was pitched at a good level from young to old.
- So many inter faith projects are about delivering community cohesion but they are less likely to reference the common spiritual life of the people participating and the people in the wider community. IFCG's project seems to have succeeded on both those levels, which is really powerful.
- Cultural activities of any kind are a great way to bring people from different faiths together.

- Arts can be used as symbolic language, rather than actual language. This means that people come together more softly. Simple activities, such as crafts, enable people to sit together and chat about everyday life.
- The creative arts are a good way to engage children, rather than just talking to them.
- People are often more willing to go out of their comfort zone to experience other people's creativity, which helps to break down barriers.
- Finding a common concept across all faiths is a great way to find a theme for a project.
- The Swindon Interfaith Group (SIG) has some links with the Swindon Poetry Society so poetry readings, with local poets, have become a regular event. SIG has had a short film made by a local filmmaker, which is also on YouTube. This was made possible through some local funding. It is mostly used for publicity.
- Libraries can be a very good 'shop window' for activities and projects.
- Books are also a good way to bring people together. Some book reading events were organised in Slough for a book for teenagers written by an author who lives in Gaza. The book is about her growing up as a Muslim girl there. 8 different schools participated.

Angels

- Angels are a concept in many faiths. People who consider themselves 'spiritual' but not 'religious' sometimes also believe in angels. That came through the artwork.
- Angels are common across many faiths. They often represent hope, togetherness and protection.
- In Belfast there is an 'Angel of Thanksgiving' sculpture which has a prominent place on the river. It was funded through the work of a local Hindu businessman. There have been some inter faith links with it, but perhaps there could be more in the future.
- If you are working with young people, it is helpful if you can use the same 'tools' as them. Art Beyond Belief works with young people across Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. It had a project called 'Who Am I?' This was seen as an art project but was about students exploring how they see religious identity. Another project was called 'Resilient Me, Resilient You'. For this iPads were used and the students were able to use their creativity, writing graffiti on walls. A film was made of the project.

Other types of arts activities

- Visual arts are a very good medium for drawing people in. One of the most engaging meetings that the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum had held was when it had music as a theme. People can be drawn in through creativity.
- Rugby Inter Faith Forum arranged, a musical concert in October. The idea was to get people from different faiths playing music. It was very well attended and a good way to bring people together.

Discussion Group 3: Inter faith engagement as part of the community cohesion agenda

Facilitator: Mike Stygal, IFN Trustee, Vice President, Pagan Federation, and member, Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action

Presenters: Rauf Bashir, Shabaz Ahmed and Katie Nolan, Building Bridges Pendle

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Mr Mike Stygal welcomed participants to the discussion group. He explained that he had been involved in inter faith activity at many different levels, as well as with local SACRES, and that he was a former school teacher.

Setting the scene, he said that local inter faith groups vary in many different ways across the country, in terms of their purposes, types of activity, and levels of resource. Building Bridges Pendle has a wide-ranging programme of activity, which includes schools work, community activities, and servicing the Pendle Forum of Faiths. Inter faith activity is an important part of all of its work strands, but its work is also broader.

Mr Rauf Bashir, Mr Shabaz Ahmed and Miss Katie Nolan offered their presentation. A copy of their PowerPoint slides is included at the end of this note and a summary of their points is below.

- Pendle has an urban corridor, surrounded by a much less diverse rural area. These different areas have distinct needs.
- Schools tend to be more diverse within the urban areas.
- *[A video clip was shown of a young person explaining that Pendle was a place she did not wish to live in any longer. She felt people were less integrated, and not*

connecting with each other, so the area felt like it was no longer a community.]

- The video is part of a project which interviewed people linked to an old mill in the area. The makers interviewed former mill workers and children of former mill workers to ask about their views on what it is like to live in the area today. Older interviewees were asked about cohesion at the time that the first wave of immigrants came to work in the mills, and younger people were asked about cohesion in the community today.
- Building Bridges Pendle (BBP) is 2 years into a 4-year project known as the 'Good Neighbours' project. It has 5 specific strands of work to it which are all interconnected: community conversations, which is about connecting communities; a good neighbours day; Pendle festival; the Schools Linking Network; and one strategic strand of work with the Pendle Community Action Network and the Pendle Forum of Faiths, which also feeds back into some of the grassroots work.
- There is a balance between work with young people and work with older people; neighbourhood-based work and borough-wide work.
- The Connecting Communities strand sees a number of activities taking place where the aim is to break down barriers and build friendships.
- One of these activities is 'Families Making Friends', which is based around parents and children coming together and having opportunities to interact.
- BBP also runs Faith, Music and Community events. These bring faith communities and residents together to share music, food and also conversation. The conversation element is very important, because the aim is not just to share a space, but to encourage interaction during the event. The events also involve a follow-up activity, where those who attended are invited to bring



Discussion group participants

their own ideas for working together to improve the community.

- *[A video was shown about one of these events.]*
- The Pendle 2050 programme brings together all those working for community cohesion, including schools, young people, the council, police, faith communities and others. They look together at issues including the economy, regeneration, immigration, and environmental and other challenges. The focus is on what people want the future to look like, and how they can use their collective influence to help achieve this future. This is also part of the Connecting Communities strand. The most recent 2050 event included business leaders as well, and the focus was on challenges facing young people and their aspirations – including challenges around sufficient job opportunities and people moving out of the area.
- *[A video was shown about this.]*
- Another project is called ‘Shapes of Water, Sounds of Hope’, which is a community arts and conversation project. It included a large public banquet, singing sessions, interviews and community conversations. The local community who lived around, and had mainly worked in, Brierfield Mill worked together with Building Bridges and a community arts practitioner. A focus was on how the closure of the mill had affected the community. Musical expression was an important part of the project, which included shape-note singing – which took the form of a square – and Sufi singing – which took the form of a circle. Out of the project a film was produced called Circle and Square, which had its community premiere in the old mill building.
- *[A video was shown of Circle and Square.]*
- This programme took place over 18 months, and the film will be toured across the UK later in 2019.
- The Pendle Schools Linking Network works to twin schools – usually Year 2 or Year 3 groups – where schools have pupils that are mainly from one ethnic background. In some schools, this had evolved to include multi-year twinning.
- Within secondary schools, two pupils from each class are usually involved in the twinning, and they do a presentation

back to their wider year group. When working with Year 7 pupils, they also create a video presentation which is used with their feeder primary schools.

- The Good Neighbours Day takes place on the same day each year. One of its mottos is 'community begins in our own homes', and it encourages local people to lead on their own projects. The Day also includes door-to-door knocking, to get neighbours talking to one another.
- The community conversation activities take 3 forms – 'talking society', 'talking lounge' and 'talkeoke'. The latter uses a format where the Chair sits in the middle of a circle, and passes a microphone around to signal that a person can speak. This approach was used shortly after the terrorist attack at Manchester Arena, and had proven to be a powerful way to get people talking.
- *[A video was shown about 'talkeoke']*
- The Pendle Peace Walk and Festival of Culture is a huge event – people are encouraged to walk to the festival together. This year, the theme was 'Celebrating People and Language.' The Festival has different 'zones', each of which has a theme and showcases local talents, crafts etc. The community really love to get involved!
- BBP will be 20 years old in November.

Mr Stygal thanked Mr Bashir, Mr Ahmed and Miss Nolan for their presentation and invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points were made. Responses from the presenters are in italics.

- Have you noticed changes in the community since these programmes began?
Yes – there are lots of little improvements which add up to show the change; for example, people now regularly stay behind after meetings and events to help clear up. This shows they feel ownership. The school pupils are also very often emotional when the linking programmes

end – they want to stay engaged! BBP is trialling an impact measurement and evaluation tool working with the University of Central Lancashire.

- How do you respond to negative media portrayals of your area?
It encourages us to respond by running more programmes! We are always looking for examples and stories we can use to evidence that the community is more engaged. We also attempt to set a standard definition of 'moderate' and 'engaged', which helps us to define the fringes or edges in relation to this. It also helps us to try to shift what is 'normal' over time.
- Do the programmes impact the neighbouring areas? Are they funded?
Partnership and collaboration used to be politically in vogue, in part because the funding regime encouraged it. However, in many areas those forms of working stopped when the money went. BBP has formed its own deep local networks to share resources. They have a sharing model with Blackburn and Burnley. BBP is at times doing work which the Council lacks the capacity to do. Partnership working enables people to pass on their skills, which is very helpful. Creating a skills bank is also useful – a central list of who people are and what their skills are. BBP has found other organisations now routinely approach it asking it to partner.
- How many people work for BBP?
There are 3 staff, and a huge number of volunteers and partners. All programmes are designed around that capacity and the skills available.

- It is great to see children and teenagers involved.
BPP works with a very wide age range. It works with bodies like Burnley and Pendle Youth Council. It also invites young people (aged 14-20) to pitch projects that BBP might fund with up to £300 for them to then deliver. Those involve work long hours to reach different parts of the community.



Cllr Tom Aditya (Bristol Multi Faith Forum) and Mike Stygal (Pagan Federation and Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action)

- I am interested in the link between inter faith and religious education. There is a high proportion of Church schools in Lancashire – does this help or hinder BBP's work?

When BBP began its work in around the year 2000, it ran a modular course on faith perspectives on citizenship roles, which had a strong RE dimension. This has changed shape over time, and its work has broadened from being just inter faith to also including inter-cultural work as well. BBP used to find it challenging to engage with pupils who were increasingly identifying with no faith. However, church schools are usually very happy to engage with BBP's work. Cross-curricular activity is also very helpful.

Mr Bashir said that BBP was inspired by a quote from Rumi: "we just need to take the unexpected step, and a new path opens up before us."

Mr Stygal said that running such a wide and diverse programme was clearly working very well, and showcasing this range of activity was a very powerful way to counter negative narratives about community cohesion.





Discussion Group 4: Local inter faith engagement with environmental issues

Facilitator: Minister David Bruton,
President, Spiritualists' National Union

Presenter: John Marder, Interfaith Officer,
Network of Buddhist Organisations, and
member, Crawley Interfaith Network; and
Kawser Akhtar, Chair, South East England
Faiths Forum

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Minister David Bruton welcomed participants to the discussion group. He spoke of the urgency of the issue and the importance of all faith communities addressing it. His own faith community organisation, the Spiritualists' National Union, would be addressing issues of climate change in its work across coming months.

Mr John Marder offered the following presentation:

Introduction

In February this year, Buddhists from a number of different groups and traditions, gathered to discuss right actions that could be taken in response to the climate problem. Greenspace projects featured strongly amongst the ideas that were shared, prompting the Network of Buddhist Organisations (NBO) to develop this guidance. Its intention is to provide basic information to groups or individuals thinking about directing their climate action through the transformation of local public greenspace.

The value of greenspace projects in climate action

There are lots of ways you can engage in climate action but here are some of the benefits that can be gained from choosing a greenspace project.

- The direct effects of greenspace in addressing the problem – plants and soil take in and store carbon, reducing the amount of Co2 in the atmosphere.
- The cooling effect of greenspaces – reducing the impact of temperature rises caused by climate change.
- The environmental benefits of greenspaces generally, for example for wildlife, flood relief and pollution control.
- The public awareness that greenspace projects can raise about the nature and severity of the climate problem.
- The demonstration of methods that people can use in their own gardens and allotments to reduce their carbon footprint.
- The wellbeing benefits that greenspaces bring for the people working in them and using them.
- The working together towards tangible outcomes, ie real places that we can embrace, share and enjoy.

What kind of projects can you do?

Any greenspace project can bring some or all of the benefits outlined above. And the project you choose will depend largely on the identified needs of the landowner and community, as well as the time/resource restrictions you have. Here are some typical examples of greenspace projects that might be possible for you.

- A community garden with an explicit climate theme. It can maximise on the 'direct effects' 'public awareness' and 'demonstration' benefits outlined above.
- Planting trees. Whether just one specimen or a whole little community woodland, the benefits are obvious.
- A community allotment. Great for demonstrating important methods that need to be applied more broadly at the agricultural scale.

- A community orchard. Can combine features of the three above, providing a nice simple space for casual use and community events.
- A community wildlife area. The ‘wildlife conservation’ and ‘climate’ messages are intertwined so great for raising awareness, demonstrating methods and lots more.
- A site for bringing people together such as an amphitheatre, reading circle or forest school. It could have a particular focus on environmental education, eco-therapy and so forth.

Projects won’t always need to be specifically and primarily about the climate problem and will not necessarily be started from scratch. You can modify an existing space or just get involved in its management and care.

A few words specifically about planting trees

Due to their size and longevity, trees are the most effective plants of all in capturing and storing carbon. And because tree planting projects are often seen as ‘one-off’ events, they are often the most popular type of greenspace climate action. But just a few important things to point out.

- You can’t just plant trees and leave them. Trees need all sorts of looking after while they get established; probably 2–3 years.
- It is best not to plant in summer. Trees need lots of watering then which isn’t good ‘climate practice’. If looking for a summer activity, raise funds for tree planting and plan an event for the autumn.
- Smaller trees often make more sense. For example, if you’re planting oaks, buy small ones. They’re much cheaper and will grow quickly with far less resource demands than larger plants. If you’re just planting one big specimen somewhere, then that’s different.

- Get expert advice. Trees need to be there for a long time so they must be right, so get expert advice on what species to choose in your situation.

This link is useful:

www.rhs.org.uk/advice/how-to-plant-a-tree

It ain’t what you do it’s the way that you do it

For a project to be optimal in directly addressing the climate problem, it might well be best to do nothing; just let nature plant its own trees and over time you’ll see a site progress through its natural succession to woodland. You will have used no resources at the outset and will, sooner or later, achieve a richly structured natural vegetation and soil system that takes in and holds lots of carbon. But realistically, for all sorts of reasons, that is unlikely to be what the landowner and community want. If you do plant, it’s important to recognise that any type of green cover, whether trees, shrubs or non-woody plants, or lawns or cropped areas and so forth are all valid components of a green space with good climate credentials.

Whatever kind of project you do, first of all it needs to meet the needs of the local community. And then it’s how you develop the site and how you maintain it that matters.

Important practical choices that we can make

Choosing the right project is essential of course to get the land and resources you need, and the support from the community. But having chosen your project here are some practical ways you can make it as climate friendly as possible.

- Choose construction materials wisely. Check out their carbon footprint as best you can. Choose recycled materials and those that can be recycled after use. Choose local materials and avoid concrete.

- Choose plants wisely too. Use hardy plants suited to the conditions you have. Field grown plants might be best. Try to avoid plants grown in heated greenhouses; peat-based composts; and non-recyclable containers.
 - Save mains water. Watering doesn't only use water but energy too. So be water-wise. Harvest rainwater. Plant in autumn/early spring. Mulch when soil is wet and try to avoid container-growing.
 - Recycle green waste. Send to local recycling or, better still, compost on site. Yes it does produce Co2 but so does breathing. Good aerobic garden composting is climate friendly.
 - Maintain soil organic matter. Apply mulches, sow green manures and use no-dig methods for crop production. Avoid fertilisers, especially synthetic ones.
 - Use natural energy. This means hand tools for everything. Battery powered machines may be possible as may renewable technologies for lighting and so forth. But avoid petrol power.
- Some links to help with some of the things mentioned above**

Composting:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=444

Green manures:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=373

Water harvesting:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=313

Mulching:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=323

Getting started and finding help

The quickest and easiest way to get started is to join an existing group with a site up-and-running. But if you're setting out on something new, here are some tips.

- Suitable sites might be under ownership of Local Authorities (typically

Borough/District or Parish Councils). Schools or hospitals may also be interested, or maybe a Housing Association.

- Get people on board, ie the landowners and the local community. Contact local residents. Meet face-to face and do online surveys.
- There are some official matters that will need sorting. You'll need public liability insurance and risk assessments. There may be a lease on the land you're adopting and further demands if looking for grants.
- Find some funding. The landowners may help but are likely to want help from you too. Look to grants, sponsorships and crowdfunding.
- Other resources. Local gardeners, landscapers, builders, artists and nurseries can be keen to help. Technical/design support may be available from council officers.
- Communication and community relations is key to everything. Use digital methods of course but also consider on-site notice boards, interpretation and interpretative artwork.

Here's some useful help to get you started:
www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/community-gardening/resources.

Ms Kawser Akhtar then offered the following reflections.

- The planet will take care of itself, it is life on the planet as we know it that we should be concerned about. We are possibly the last generation to do something about climate change before it is too late. We need to cut carbon emissions on a huge scale over the next decade. In Surrey, we have had the launch of the Surrey Climate Commission. I was fortunate to have attended and heard some amazing speakers, all experts in their respective fields.



Participants in discussion

- Professor Chris Rapley CBE, UCL Professor of Climate Science, member of the Science Museum, London's Advisory Board, and Academia Europaea, spoke about the need for transformation. He showed a thermal image of the planet and said the planet has not experienced these changes in 3 million years.
- One such example of change has been made apparent recently in the news, with images of the Himalayan glaciers melting in the winter days, which means the water will dry up over the summer. The glaciers are a critical water source for 250 million people living across eight different countries. Even if the world takes dramatic action and limits warming to 1.5C by the end of the century, 36% of the glaciers will have disappeared.
- We need to take urgent action now before it is too late. It is estimated that, even if we make major change now, it will take 30 years before we start seeing signs of improvement.
- The Industrial Revolution started in Godalming, Surrey with the first power plant. Without a doubt it has benefitted us – but not without a huge cost to the planet. We started the Industrial revolution; it is now time to start a new energy revolution.
- What is the role of people of faith? All religions encourage their followers to take care of their environment and give the responsibility to be caretakers or stewards of the planet. We need to reach out to our faith communities to make them aware of climate change and of the urgent need to make positive changes in individuals' lifestyles, as places of worship and as communities.
- There is an opportunity for people of all faiths and none, charities, voluntary organisations, places of worship, businesses, schools and other bodies to work together to bring change.
- We need to abolish fossil fuel use, look at energy efficiency in existing buildings, reduce motor vehicle transport, encourage recycling, use renewable energy, use and maintain our natural reserves – 141k tonnes of carbon are stored at Chobham Common; 3698 tonnes of CO2 are sequestered annually. Surrey is the most wooded county in England – what does it do for us? According to Surrey Wildlife Trust it removes 800 tonnes of air pollution and 350,000 tonnes of carbon annually.

- There is a lot we can do as people of faith. Earlier this year, Woking People of Faith organised a conference: 'Can faith institutions save our planet?'. The Bishop of Guildford, Rt Revd Andrew Watson, and CEO of Faith Associates, Shaukat Warraich, explored the subject and ways of making change. They concluded that, ultimately, it is not the faith institution, but the people of faith who can make the difference.
- Plastic Free Woking, an initiative begun by a Muslim woman, has brought many people from the community together to make Woking the first Surrey 'plastic free' town. It is small but meaningful initiatives like this that have the greatest impact.
- There are many resources on websites with information about eco-friendly products to simple lifestyle changes that we can do to help save life on our planet. Inter faith forums can find local initiatives and support them, for example tree planting.
- Our conference this year, on 16 September, as South East England Faiths Forum is '12 years to save the planet?' the aim of the conference will be to examine faith, belief and non-faith perspectives on climate change, and the influence and impact that faith and non-faith groups can and should have on the future of our planet. It will be at the University of Surrey and all are welcome to attend.
- Tree planting is good but it is really important to ensure that trees are planted in appropriate places, that they are of a suitable type and that the aftercare is planned and consistent.
- Local inter faith bodies and faith groups can make a direct contribution to the environment by ensuring that their own carbon footprint is low.
- Local inter faith groups can encourage local faith groups and others to work for climate change by holding discussions and arranging volunteering projects.
- Local groups, such as Barnet Multi Faith Forum are thinking about practical actions that they can take.
- A number of groups, such as Watford Interfaith Association have gardening projects.
- Faith groups are making a contribution on this front – Hindu temples, for example, are working hard to use reusable and recyclable plates and cutlery for events. That makes a big difference, especially at times of festivals.
- Quakers (the Religious Society of Friends) have been taking a lead on a working to tackle climate change. They see it as a faith imperative.
- There are new initiatives starting such as 'Faith for the Climate' which have a special focus on supporting and encouraging faith communities to work to combat climate change and for the wellbeing of the planet. Faith communities also play a big part in the work of the Climate Coalition. Regionally, in North West England, Faiths4Change is doing important work.

Minister Bruton thanked Mr Marder and Ms Akhtar for their presentations. In discussion examples were given of some local activities and the following points were made:

- It is very important to plant trees! The World Interfaith Harmony Grove is a grove of trees in the Scottish Highlands purchased by Interfaith Scotland under the Trees for Life scheme: interfaithscotland.org/interfaith-scotland-plant-20-trees-to-celebrate-20th-anniversary-the-world-interfaith-harmony-grove.

Discussion Group 5: Faith communities and local inter faith engagement

Facilitator: Anthony Silkoff, Interfaith and Social Action Officer, Board of Deputies of British Jews

Presenter: Rajnish Kashyap, General Secretary, Hindu Council UK, and member, Council of Dharmaic Faiths and Faiths Forum for London

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Mr Anthony Silkoff welcomed participants to the discussion group. This group would be discussing how national faith communities could encourage and support local inter faith engagement. The Board of Deputies of British Jews tended to play a role as a national body and to let the local communities play their own role, but it would like to do more to empower and support its local communities across the country.

Mr Rajnish Kashyap said that at a national level he worked with the Hindu Council UK and at a local level he was on the management committee of a temple in Southall in Middlesex. He addressed two questions. A summary of his points is below.

How can national faith community bodies encourage and support local members to play an active role in developing skills for inter faith dialogue?

- In my area, inter faith relations is a work in progress. There are activities in different places, but they are not necessarily connected with each other. Local members would benefit greatly if they were aware of programmes and events across the country and at national level, so they could share these with their communities. In turn, they could invite people to their local events and programmes, which would bring more

integration as well as scope for interaction and discussions. This would bring a lot of awareness and understanding of grassroots activities and the requirements of local members. It would also enable them actively to engage with national level members who interact with the government at a higher level with vital information from across the country.

- People from different faith communities recognise that, even though they are diverse in their practices and beliefs regarding worship, gender sensitivities, dietary requirements and many other issues, they have many common goals. Examples of such goals are: better education among the young; sensitising local authorities, schools and others about their faith and any misunderstandings; racial harmony; and facing any other challenges that may exist.
- Reducing historical tensions between, or within, faith groups at local level would be helped if there was an atmosphere created at the national level to identify common ground and build gradually on that.
- Those who engage with inter faith issues may be practising members of a faith, but are not always official representatives of their faith community; therefore, they are not necessarily empowered to make commitments on behalf of that group or to feedback to their community about inter faith developments.
- Terminology should be simple as sometimes it is not understood by faith-based institutions.
- Some of those who are hesitant about inter faith engagement at local level, are nervous about whether inter faith engagement has an implicit political or conversion agenda. It is important for national bodies to address those fears openly.

- The marginalisation of faith groups by an increasingly secularist society has undermined the good work done by faith groups. Perhaps we need to recognise that strengthening faith groups is not anti-secular. Allowing each faith community to flourish and share their achievements and challenges alike will actually enrich the society.
- It is a good idea to find ‘champions’, who are naturally good at building relationships and see inter faith relations as part of their life and their being human rather than as work.
- Two further practical challenges of promoting inter faith engagement are limited timing and funding.
- From my experience, and given the challenges and strengths I have outlined, I suggest these six priorities for inter faith engagement:
 1. Build a communication structure that connects people.
 2. Revisit the purpose and values of inter faith work.
 3. Develop a shared strategic vision for those involved in inter faith engagement.
 4. Nurture fuller relationships with local faith communities.
 5. Engage a much broader audience in inter faith dialogues and events within the local area.
 6. Allow a dialogue wherein people of different religious traditions can listen and talk to each other in ways that allow genuine depth.

What kind of skills can help faith community leaders (clergy and lay) in their local inter faith roles?

- Places of worship are essentially small communities. Most of the pastoral care for people happens within the life of

those communities. A local temple priest, is a community priest. He responds to the needs of those who regularly come to the temple and also of those who come for assistance, be those spiritual, personal or material. Many temples have support groups – for the elderly, for the frail, for mothers with small children, for the bereaved, for young people and for other identifiable groups.

- Prayer is important for most communities. It is a most powerful practice. In addition to being a powerful, personal practice, prayer can also play a role in strengthening even the most diverse communities. It can bring people together across racial, social and economic differences. It enables individuals to interact one another and to celebrate the diversity of those involved.
- ‘Bridging cultural practices’, like prayer, work to create a new sense of shared identity within groups. Most talk of diversity rests on an understanding of ‘differences’ that are rooted in fixed categories, like racial groups, genders and social classes. Prayer works by creating new categories that transcend differences. It only does this, though, when it manages to incorporate values from multiple faiths and backgrounds. In faith-based communities, leaders often highlight people’s shared identities as ‘people of faith’, while still recognising their differences.

Mr Silkoff thanked Mr Kashyap for his presentation and invited participants to discuss the challenges and opportunities involved. In discussion the following points were made:

Support and encouragement provided by national bodies

- It is often helpful when national bodies are able to provide guidelines. For example, the Christian Muslim Forum has produced guidelines for work between churches and mosques. This includes how to consider different sensibilities and respect traditions. The Feast, an



Participants in discussion group

organisation which works with young people, has issued dialogue guidelines. These include, for example, the advice not to speak on behalf of someone else and their faith, rather just to talk about your own faith. The guidelines have been translated into a number of different languages and are available to download. National organisations can be very good at providing help and advice for local organisations. The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) has done a lot of work producing guidelines, for example, about how to plan an event, considering which dates to avoid, how to make the food inclusive and so forth.

- The Board of Deputies of British Jews has been in touch with the Church of England and with the Council of Christians and Jews to discuss producing a guide for Christians who want to engage with the Passover Seder because that has to be done very sensitively. The Revd Patrick Moriarty, currently presenting in another workshop, wrote an article about this in 2018. Some Christians want to do this, some Jews don't want them to and others do, so the Board is trying to create guidance to navigate this.
- Sometimes it can feel, when you are going into inter faith dialogue, as though you need to be a diplomat who arrives with all your 'lines' prepared in advance

to answer difficult or political questions. When Jewish people are involved in inter faith dialogue, they are often challenged with questions that relate to politics. Local communities might not be able, nor want, to spend time creating a manifesto of policies. That is an interesting challenge to consider.

- It is important to remember that we all started somewhere. Even though we may now engage at national level, we probably began our engagement at local level. It's OK to make mistakes, so long as you learn from them. It is great to have national help from IFN's guidelines and publications.
- The Methodist Church has just given a connexional grant to The Feast, which is running a training day for them at the end of July. This is because the children and young people's manifesto challenged the church to do more to break down barriers, challenge prejudice and to build relationships with people who are different.
- I met with the Archbishop of Canterbury's Interfaith Adviser, who has a local base, and he suggested a local inter faith meeting. We invited churches and Hindu temples and also some Muslims.

- There are also organisations at national level that are doing inter faith work without identifying as inter faith organisations. Remembering Srebrenica, for example, does this and it involves people from many different faiths. But it probably would not describe itself as an inter faith organisation.

Skills for faith community leaders in their local inter faith roles

- The basic principles of any inter faith dialogue are to listen and try to understand. You try to be positive and learn as you go along. Over time your language becomes more polished.
- Some of the key principles to engaging that I have learned are:

Listen to what everyone has to say. Do not tell them what you believe, let them tell you what they believe. Do not force people to agree with your view. Acknowledge similarities and difference between faiths. Speak positively about faith rather than negatively about other people's faiths. Make every effort to get along with everyone, regardless of their race, gender, faith or age. Do not judge people by their faith. Respect other people's views, even if you disagree. If you feel uncomfortable, say so.

- Sometimes you do have to represent another faith. For example, a representative of the Inter-faith Council for Wales might represent all faiths in Wales at Government meetings. They have to be open and honest and ask people from different faith communities what their views are so that they can then represent them. There is nothing wrong with asking questions.
- There is a large spectrum of opinion and religious practice within each faith community. The Board of Deputies represents people from all parts of the Jewish community, from Liberal to Orthodox. In principle, you are taught not to speak on behalf of everyone, but if you bring two groups together and one of the

groups has one very strong perspective, how do you stop the other group from thinking that is the only perspective of that faith group, when it might not be the majority perspective of that faith group?

- That is a real challenge for all national bodies. The Hindu Council UK also finds this. Hinduism has many different practices but a core faith of 5 permanent values and everyone believes in those.

Local inter faith bodies and their impact

- The Woolf Institute is undertaking a research project which is looking at ways to develop indicators to measure the impact of inter faith dialogue. One of the key questions is how to bridge this gap between the local and national level and what the mechanisms are behind this transfer. This concerns both how national level decisions trickle down to the local level and, vice versa, how local level activities percolate upwards.
- There are definitely some measurable outcomes. IFN has a number of local inter faith organisations in membership and also has records of other local inter faith groups which exist but which are not in membership. One of the challenges though is the inter faith groups that IFN does not know about. Groups that are known about by IFN, both member and non-member, receive communications and help from IFN at a national level. Becoming a member of IFN is very helpful because then help is only a phone call away. There is information on the IFN website about applying for membership.
- As part of my PhD I looked at social action and the development of the smaller, more informal groups that operate on a small scale, which are faith-based and faith-motivated but are multi faith because they involve volunteers from across communities. This is almost another level beneath the surface to discover. They have no incentive or need to join a national body or even to describe themselves as an inter faith

group. It would be interesting to know how to bridge the gap between formal, recognised inter faith work and the informal inter faith work done by faith communities, for example, with the homeless. It might be helpful for local inter faith organisations to look more deeply into their local areas to find out what is going on. Of course, not all local inter faith groups would have the capacity to do this.

- It would be helpful to have a template for local inter faith groups to capture what they do and the outcomes of this. Loneliness and isolation is a big thing across all faith groups. Faith groups provide luncheon clubs and bring people together to talk, but that type of work is not recorded or seen. A template to capture the work, including for example, the number of hours, the number of volunteers and so forth, would be helpful.
- An inter faith event could be a coffee morning, a knitting class or a seminar. It is very hard to have a measurable outcome and tick boxes for such different types of events.
- Every Sunday a Hindu temple in Southall gives food to 300–400 people. Volunteers want to give their time without payment. That is hard to quantify.
- Even if the project you do isn't done to get funding, if you capture what you do, it means when there is a poverty strategy being developed for your area, because you are a crucial provider of food in the area, they will come to you and look at how you carry out your project. Capturing the valuable contribution of faith communities, helps us to influence work going forward.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has a national role but at the local level groups have to rely on their local authorities. It would be helpful to share best practice across the country where local authorities are supporting groups.
- There is a difference between groups set up with the intention of strengthening inter faith relationships, such as Barnet Multi Faith Forum, and a group whose sole intention is to run a food bank involving as many people as possible. They might have different outcomes. IFN is very good at thinking about how you strengthen inter faith relationships at different levels, national, regional and local. Some activities start in an organic way, such as a litter pick, but their initial aim is not to strengthen inter faith relations. There are hundreds of these projects. Many are hidden. The challenge for the national level is how to find out about them and support them.
- With these informal activities, the intricacies and nuances of religious practice are often overlooked. For example, there is a Sikh group that runs a kitchen in Manchester. People from different communities take part. There is a deep religious significance to that which is skimmed over by the policy discourse.
- Although single faith projects are valuable, we are stronger together. Whenever there is any atrocity, there will always be a go-to organisation, which is usually the local inter faith organisation. If policies mean that more people fall into poverty, it will have an impact on a food bank run by an individual faith community. It's important to give value to the established umbrella inter faith organisations, even if that is just sharing with them what we do because that all counts towards the value of the faith sector.
- Using social media is a great way to spread information. Having an up to date website and social media accounts is very important.

Discussion Group 6: Amplifying impact – maximising your local connections and highlighting your work

Facilitator: Ms Katharina Smith-Muller,
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England
and Wales

Presenters: Sheikh Irfan Soni and the
Revd Simon Cash, North Kirklees
Inter Faith

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Ms Katharina Smith-Muller welcomed
participants to the group.

**The Revd Simon Cash and Sheikh Irfan
Soni** offered their presentation. A copy of
their PowerPoint slides is included at the
end of this note.

The Revd Simon Cash offered the following
reflections:

- The organisation has recently changed
to describing itself as a forum, rather
than council, because forum feels less
formal and more inclusive.
- North Kirklees is part of a larger
metropolitan borough area centred on
Huddersfield. Kirklees was created in
1974 with local government
reorganisation and has developed its
own inter faith structures to meet the
needs of a diverse population.
- With the change in government in 2010
Kirklees Faiths Forum closed due to
withdrawal of funding.
- It was decided to create two inter faith
bodies, in part because there were very
different needs in the north and the south
of Kirklees. One body was Huddersfield
Interfaith Council and the other North
Kirklees Inter Faith, the latter based in the

Heavy Woollen District – Batley,
Dewsbury and Heckmondwike.

- It was important to ensure that the aims
of the new body were achievable. So its
aim was framed simply thus: 'to improve
understanding between Christians and
Muslims, and those of other faiths'.
- NKIFF is predominantly Christian and
Muslim in character due to the
demography of the area. It also has
Jewish and Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints involvement.
- In order to have impact it is important to
be visible. During Inter Faith Week (IFW) it
was decided to do 'Roses for Peace'
(inspired by Kaneez Khan at Near
Neighbours). 400 roses were distributed
in Dewsbury and 300 in Batley, each with
messages of peace. It was decided that
the optimum time to give them out was
the respective market days in the two
towns. In Dewsbury 400 roses went in
20mins. It is planned to do this again in
2019, but to get more roses! One issue last
year was getting them at a decent price
but Tesco helped. The first year of the
roses were paid for by legacy money from
Kirklees Faiths Forum but in the future
NKIFF will be looking for sponsorship.
- Prayer vigils are also a key part of letting
the wider public know about the work of
NKIFF. Vigils have been organised for
terror related events in Manchester and
London, as well as for the plight of the
Rohingya in Myanmar and, most recently,
events in Christchurch (NZ) and Sri Lanka.
- For Holocaust Memorial Day NKIFF
organised a puppet presentation to
commemorate Remembering
Srebrenica. They had support from Leeds
Jewish community.
- The Revd Mark Umpleby, who could not
be present at the National Meeting as he
was away, had formed a 'dynamic duo'
with Sheikh Soni, as can be seen from
social media.



Participants in discussion group

Sheikh Irfan Soni spoke about showing solidarity through flowers. He offered the following points:

- Showing solidarity is key, and solidarity must be built on friendship. After the Christchurch attack, Mark Umpleby went to mosques; after the Sri Lanka attacks, Irfan Soni went with other Muslims to churches.
- Schools' work in times of crisis is important.
- IFW is key.
- Mark Umpleby and Irfan Soni are joint chaplains to the Mayor.
- Local media is very important, especially the local newspaper and radio. Social media is also very important: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The power of social media is one which can change attitudes, but it takes time.
- Being in public together also is an important witness.
- Other cohesion events are an opportunity to promote the work of NKIFF, such as inter faith iftars, open mosques and churches days and sports events. Batley

Poets is also very important and they have done events in Inter Faith Week and at other times of the year. Linking to them and events at Batley Library is key to sharing NKIFF's work and vision.

- Future events are being planned. As well as the Roses for Peace event, a photo walk is being planned, where participants will go for a walk and take photos of the community followed by a presentation of what was seen.

Katharina Smith-Muller thanked the presenters and opened the discussion up to the group. The following reflections were offered:

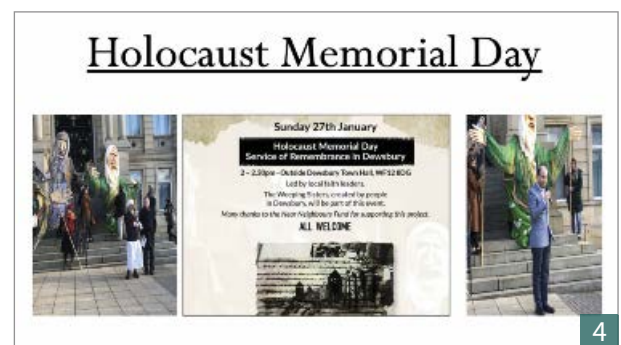
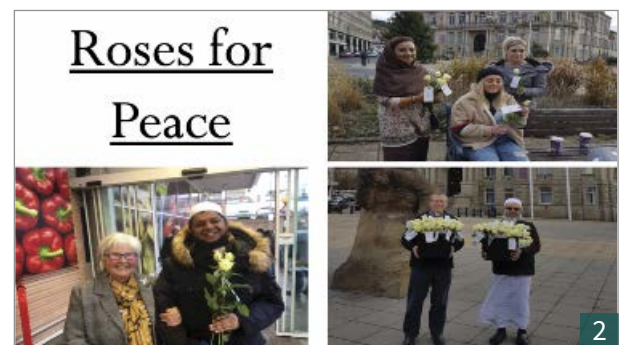
- Working with statutory agencies is a way to amplify impact. Harrow is a diverse community, with high Hindu presence. A local pandit has organised a Police Surgery, which others can visit and meet the police. He also has a Home Office surgery. Other communities are also involved, especially synagogues. It is important to respect the space of those who don't want to engage.
- Sometimes engaging with the press is difficult. Much of it is down to the editor and sometimes local papers aren't all that local at all. One way around that is

to run your own 'paper' so that events are covered in depth and with truthfulness. An example of this is in Milton Keynes, where InterfaithMK publishes its own monthly newsletter, with invitations, accurate reports of local inter faith activities and photographs. Milton Keynes Islamic Arts and Culture has hosted an annual Festival of Arts and Culture, which has been profiled on Interfaith MK's website. The key to amplifying impact is being persistent and involving all the ethnic, religious and cultural groups within the community. Engaging with business is also important; in Milton Keynes a local insurance firm now offers financial support annually.

- In Greater Manchester they have found that personal contact is key and that social media is valuable to demonstrate the contact that has taken place.
- When supporting or organising events, the Manchester programme involves 3 to 4 faiths at a time, sometimes more. This sends an important message. During Inter Faith Week, Bolton

ensured that there was something every day. In Bury during Inter Faith Week, places of worship invited people to come and visit; they were open every day of the week so as to maximise opportunity. It is important to make it simple, not too complicated.

- Doing events with children and then inviting parents along often has high impact and engages those who would not normally engage with inter faith activity.
- It is important to find a journalist who understands the importance of the work and to carry on feeding them with information and stories. Persistence is key.
- To amplify impact it is important to be trusted. The local inter faith group needs credibility and to have individuals who can have access to the media or who become a trusted port of call for journalists.
- In an age where image is all important, social media images are crucial for promoting inter faith work.



Showing Solidarity

- Revd. Mark Umpleby – visited one of the local Mosques for (Friday prayers) in Batley.
- The Muslim community visited 5 churches.



5

School Visits

- Myself and Revd. Mark Umpleby - conduct assemblies and visits classrooms to answer questions.
- Revd. Simon and Mufti Amin Pandor – conduct assemblies.



6

Faith Covenant

- Led by Myself and Revd. Mark Umpleby (who were the Chaplains to the Mayor) with the help of the Mayor of Kirklees and local authority (Kirklees).



7

Local Media & Social Media

To help its outreach by:

- Local newspapers.
- Local Radio.
- Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
 - Share pictures and stories of events/visits/meetings.
 - we don't engage with negative comments.
 - Tag in people on photos to encourage sharing.



8



9



10

More in Common

#MORE IN COMMON

"...what surprises me time and time again as I travel around the constituency is that we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us."

Jo Cox MP, Maiden Speech
3rd June 2015



11

More in Common



- A national movement working towards **building strong and resilient communities** where everyone has a sense of **belonging and identity**
- Acknowledging the **changing face of communities**
- Focusing on the **things which we have in common** rather than the things which divide us
- **Counteracting the narrative of division & negativity**
- **Not party political**

12

Future Events

- Photo walk
- Roses for peace

13



14

Discussion Group 7: 'Bilateral' and 'multi faith' inter faith engagement at local level

Facilitator: Siriol Davies, Christian
Muslim Forum

Presenter: The Revd Patrick Moriarty,
Trustee and Hon Christian Secretary,
Council of Christians and Jews

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Ms Siriol Davies welcomed participants to the discussion group. She explained that she works for the Christian Muslim Forum as lead developer for the Church Mosque Twinning Project. Bilateral dialogue is very important because particular relationships need particular support. Big family gatherings are always needed but sometimes smaller conversations are needed as well to strengthen relationships between certain members. While IFN links in membership mainly multi faith local inter faith bodies, it has always seen bilateral dialogue as of great importance. Among its national inter faith bodies members are the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) (a founder member of IFN back in 1987), the Hindu Christian Forum and the Christian Muslim Forum. The significance of bilateral dialogue is highlighted in IFN's booklet *Good to Talk: Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue* as well as in others of its publications such as the report on a seminar that it held some years ago at the Lambeth Palace on the topic of bilateral dialogue.

The Revd Patrick Moriarty offered his presentation. A copy of his PowerPoint slides is included at the end of this note and a summary of his points is below.

- During the week I have a leadership role as a Headmaster of a Jewish school and at the weekend I am a Church of England priest. This in itself highlights why

bilateral dialogue is so important. I do not have the Headmaster role for any particular reason, just because I applied for it. The school, parents and pupils see it as positive that Christians and Jews are working together, not competing or undermining one another.

- CCJ was founded 1942, in the crucible of the Nazi Holocaust, and is the leading nationwide forum for Christian Jewish relations. It is unique in having a central organisation and also a series of branches spread throughout the country. It is constantly a dialogue between places. There are both dialogues in individual places all over the country and also dialogues between the branches and head office. Bilateral dialogue is bridge building and is what motivates me as an inter faith practitioner.
- Bilateral dialogue is not a substitute for multilateral dialogue. It suits some situations and some personalities to have multi faith dialogue. Both are very important. Slide 4 shows me with colleagues from many different faiths on the 'March of the Living' at Auschwitz.
- So what is the point of bilateral engagement?
 - Firstly, it enables people to maintain a focus. The risk of a lack of focus, is that you have a nice cup of tea but there's no outcome or depth of discussion.
 - Secondly, it's about building relationships, which is easier to do when there are less people. It is easier to gain more expertise focusing on one other community.
 - Thirdly, you get more depth of knowledge. What you lose in breadth, you gain in depth. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Martin Buber's book *I and Thou* speaks about how when a relationship goes beyond fear and becomes intimate, you experience something wonderful.

- Fourthly, in the case of CCJ, Jews and Christians have a uniquely common heritage. In some ways they are divided by a common heritage but it's a good place to start.
- There is plenty enough diversity and variety within one or two communities to keep conversations going.
- A good approach to dialogue is 'Think-pair-share':
 - Think for yourself what your answer is
 - Then pair up with your neighbour to talk about it
 - Then share your thoughts as a whole group

This works well because you process your own thoughts, then build up dialogue to clarify these and then build confidence to share them.

- CCJ runs a Yad Vashem Clergy Seminar, a project which takes Christian clergy to Yad Vashem to discuss the Holocaust. The issues raised by Antisemitism are particularly acute in Christian Jewish relationships.
- Amy-Jill Levine, a Jewish Professor based in the United States, has a great deal of expertise and knowledge of Christianity and has written a lot about how Christians often misunderstand their own scriptures.
- CCJ is currently working on a resource about Antisemitism to help Christian clergy. This is a deep resource looking at a particular dialogue.
- CCJ also organises an Israel-Palestine Study Tour in which Jews, Christians and Muslims are all involved.
- There are a number of national bilateral groupings, including Nisa-Nashim which is a Jewish Muslim Women's Network. There are also some local bilateral groups.
- On a human level there is often a fear of saying the wrong thing and causing offence or hurt. We are all trying to learn from each other but sometimes we might accidentally push the wrong button. It is useful to have the experience of others engaged in bilateral dialogue to learn good practice because when dialogue works well it's wonderful and everyone benefits. Human relationships are the most important aspect. Should we perhaps state at the beginning of a discussion that we have good intentions? *In years past when there was a row, the culture was to say "I'm right and you're wrong". Now it seems to be that we say "I'm right and you're bad". That says that we have lost the ability to trust that the other person is coming from a place of sincerity and seeking the common good, even though we may think that's profoundly wrong. The worst mistakes are the ones we don't know we're making.*
- In a bilateral situation the possibility of relational risk taking is greater but the reward is a deeper understanding. CCJ is very supportive and can be contacted for any advice about bilateral dialogue. CMF is also very happy to help and has lot of experience around the country.
- Bilateral conversations offer more time for difficult issues to be discussed. For years the North East branch of CCJ avoided discussing the Israel-Palestine position. Eventually we trusted each other more and started to listen to each other. The people involved didn't necessarily change their views but did listen to one another. In bilateral work it is easier to move out of the superficial and to be more bold and honest. Having a third or fourth community involved changes the dynamic. *I was part of an inter faith project in Cambridge where a group of carefully chosen senior faith leaders came together*

Ms Davies thanked Mr Moriarty for his presentation and invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points were made. Responses from the presenter are in italics.

I was part of an inter faith project in Cambridge where a group of carefully chosen senior faith leaders came together

for a period of dialogue over 9 days. There was a very sophisticated level of organisation and they were all highly skilled, experienced people. But, even that organisation, at the end of a 9 day encounter, said that, on principle, they did not include discussion of Israel-Palestine in the programme. When the organisation did tackle the issue, it was as part of an even more carefully structured process, building a safe container, enabling us to understand root dynamics and the different roles that we fall into. It was all very carefully planned, so that we could then have conversations where it was ok to rant and rave and cry. It needed very careful structuring.

- Through bilateral dialogue, you can discover that the other community isn't nearly as homogenous as you might think. You can mistakenly assume what other people think, when it's not true. Often people within one faith community disagree on topics.
- Bilateral dialogue offers more chance to explore differences within a community.
- One of the principles of Jainism is pluralism so people take inter faith respect for granted but it is very difficult to get actually people from the community to practically engage. Jain Jewish and Jain Christian dialogues exist but it is hard to get the community involved.
- It is important that people are talking at grassroots level, not just religious leaders.
- It would be interesting to know how many people are now involved in multilateral dialogue because they started with bilateral dialogue, ie they just met just one person of another faith and it grew from there. I was the son of a Baptist Christian Minister and my best friend at school was Jewish. It was a powerful conversation that I once had with my best friend's mother that started me thinking about justice and social issues and 'the other' and led me to think more broadly about theological issues. It was only later on that I encountered Muslims and people from other faiths.
- I am a Christian and my best friend at school was a Muslim.
- My best friend at school was also from another faith.
- I am a Sikh at a Catholic school. Bilateral conversations can help you to find out about commonalities and this helps you to bond. Relationships with people from other communities feel closer at a one-to-one level.
- Trust and depth are key. It is helpful to have someone leading the dialogue who is sensitive to both of these and can capitalise on questions asked and ensure they are answered in a safe environment.
- Planned deep dialogue may not always be the best route as the language used when each community 'presents' can be defensive. Sometimes it is better to allow dialogue to happen informally. For instance, on a school trip to a mosque some years ago, a father asked his son to show the other children how he prayed, which the boy did. This demonstrated a complete trust between the father and the boy. The boy was not usually very confident but this led to him being asked lots of questions by his class members and to him teaching them. That learning developed because there was a safe environment created without tight structuring.
- Across recent decades, the UK seems to have lost the ability to talk about religion as an interest. We don't talk about it in the public sphere, but in other countries it's common place to do so.
- Faith has become more private.
- The UK is a very diverse country. In Southwark in London there are 300 plus churches and a very faithful body of people from different religions who do

practise their religion and talk about it openly.

- There are times and places in our lives when we do talk about our faith and times and places when we might think it is not appropriate. This shows how important it is to create spaces for particular dialogues.



Bilateral Interfaith Engagement

Patrick Moriarty
Headteacher, JCoSS
Curate, St Stephen's Church, St Albans
Trustee, CCJ






THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



1



A priest as head of a Jewish school...?

What's that about?



2



The Council of Christians and Jews

The leading nationwide forum for Christian-Jewish engagement

Dialogue... on campus, between Rabbis & Clergy, in branch events and central programmes

Social Action... Freedom Seder, #StillanIssue, If Not Now, when

Education... Holocaust, AntiSemitism, Israel/Palestine

Centre & Branches



3

Just to reassure you...



4

Why be bilateral...

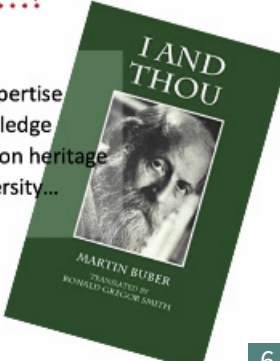


...when you could be multilateral

5

Just the two of us...?

- To maintain a focus
- To build relationships & expertise
- To promote depth of knowledge
- To probe a uniquely common heritage
- There's plenty enough diversity...
- Think – pair – share?



6

For example...

- Yad Vashem Clergy Seminar
- Amy-Jill Levine
- Christian AntiSemitism Resource
- Israel-Palestine Study Tour

7

Participant list

Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE
Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

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

Most Revd Father Oluwole Abiola OBE
Council of African and Afro-Caribbean
Churches UK

Cllr Tom Aditya
Bristol Multi Faith Forum

Mr Waleed Ahmad
Swindon Interfaith Group

Mr Shabaz Ahmed
Building Bridges Pendle

Ms Swadeka Ahsun
World Congress of Faiths

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Hounslow Friends of Faith

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Faith Network for Manchester

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Harrow Interfaith

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Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum

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Mrs Penny Smith-Orr
Faiths Together in Croydon

Sheikh Irfan Soni
North Kirklees Inter Faith

Ms Emel Soylu
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Ms Patricia Stoa
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Trustee

Mr David Storey
International Interfaith Centre

Mr Mike Stygal
Pagan Federation, Canterbury and District
Inter Faith Action and IFN Trustee

Mr Chris Turner
Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government

Professor Paul Weller
Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist
Union of Great Britain

Miss Sarah West
Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact
Group/Westcreative

Mr Karl Wightman
Baha'i Community of the UK

National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK

The changing face of local inter faith dialogue and cooperation

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

9.45am	Registration and refreshments
10.15am	Welcome from Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE and Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co- Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK
10.20am	Grassroots inter faith engagement in the UK today – snapshots of a changing environment A short overview presentation from IFN Q and A
10.35am	Impacts of change – challenge and opportunity Rabbi Warren Elf MBE and the Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi, Director and Co-Chair of Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M) In 2017 Faith Network for Manchester's Rabbi Warren Elf spoke to the 30th Anniversary National Meeting about the faith community response following the terrible Manchester Arena attack. He has been invited back, with Co-Chair Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi, to reflect on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the impact for local inter faith organisations of seeking to respond to recurrent atrocities and hate crime issues;• the increasing expectations on local inter faith organisations – at a time where funding is often in short supply or unpredictable;• operating in an environment where, in some areas, such as Manchester, there are a growing number of initiatives;• how FN4M is adapting in positive ways to working, at this time, without local government support; and• some of the other challenges and opportunities of the present time. Q and A
11.00am	'Dialogue on the Spot' A chance to talk with your neighbour about the theme of the day

11.10am	Plenary discussion Sharing of reflections in the context of the first two presentations of the day and considerations of questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we see as the most important aspects of local inter faith engagement? • What are currently some of the biggest challenges? • What vision do we have for how we contribute to society around us?
11.25am	A perspective on variety of initiatives and the importance of the involvement of faith groups Geetha Maheshwaran, London Boroughs Faiths Network (LBFN) LBFN plays a part in supporting the work of local inter faith organisations in London – which are very varied in type and activity. Geetha Maheshwaran talks about this and about some of the opportunities and challenges. She also speaks about the importance of involvement by local faith groups, from the perspective of her role at the Shree Ghanapathy Temple in Wimbledon which plays a very active part in local inter faith activity. Q and A Dr Maureen Sier, Director, Interfaith Scotland and IFN Trustee Dr Maureen Sier offers some reflections in response to the morning’s presentations and discussion. These are rooted in her experience and perspective as Director of Interfaith Scotland which, as part of its wide-ranging work, offers advice and support to the 20 multi faith local inter faith groups in Scotland, from the Scottish Borders all the way to Shetland.
12.00pm	Discussion groups/workshops – See details later in programme Delegates’ discussion group/workshop numbers are listed on the participant list. Each begins with a presentation, followed by Q and A and then opens out into discussion. A note will be kept of key points. Each group is asked to identify one point that it would like its Rapporteur to feed back to the plenary session after lunch.
1.10pm	LUNCH Vegetarian sandwich lunch provided. Prayer space available. A chance to network and look at the displays.
2.10 pm	Welcome back to plenary Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE and Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK
2.15pm	Brief feedback of points from discussion groups / workshops

2.30pm	Trust, mutuality and sustainability The Revd David Herbert, Chair, Newcastle Council of Faiths Newcastle Council of Faiths' work and its pattern of connections are wide-ranging. Its Chair, the Revd David Herbert, Moderator of the North East Synod of the United Reformed Church, reflects on how inter faith engagement evolves across the years; the importance of continuing to develop relationships of trust and mutuality; and some of the ingredients that help make for sustainability and connection. Q and A
2.50 pm	Supporting local projects The Revd Liz Carnelley, National Project Director, Near Neighbours The Church Urban Fund's Near Neighbours Programme, supported by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, has for some years provided grants and offered support to a wide range of inter faith projects in a number of areas of England. Ms Carnelley gives some examples and reflects on how she believes such programmes and small grants can bring benefit and how short term projects can often bear long term fruit. Q and A
3.10pm	Inter Faith Week – launch of the 2019 Week programme Julie Jones, Vice-Chair, Inter-faith Council for Wales and IFN Trustee talks about the fantastic platform that the Week offers for increasing inter faith understanding and cooperation, and increasing religious literacy. Launch of <i>Inter Faith Week: Stories from 2018, Inspiration for 2019</i> with: Sheikh Irfan Soni, teacher and member, North Kirklees Inter Faith Ed Petersen, Chair, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum Trupti Patel, President, Hindu Forum of Britain Cllr Tom Aditya, Chair, Bristol Multi-Faith Forum
3.25pm	Closing reflections from the Co-Chairs
3.30pm	Close of National Meeting Tea available
3.40–4.30pm	Annual General Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK <i>For representatives of member bodies of IFN. Separate papers being circulated. There will be a formal thank you at the AGM to The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson who will be standing down after 5 years as IFN Co-Chair from the national faith communities.</i>

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 30 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 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Member organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2019–20

Faith community representative bodies

Baha'i Community of the UK
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
Board of Deputies of British Jews
British Muslim Forum
Buddhist Society
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
Churches Together in England
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK)
Druid Network
General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
Hindu Council (UK)
Hindu Forum of Britain
Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain
Institute of Jainology
Islamic Cultural Centre
Jain Network
Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain (Association of Muslim Scholars)
Methodist Church in Britain
Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
Muslim Council of Britain
Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
Pagan Federation
Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland
Spiritualists' National Union
Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB
United Reformed Church in the UK
Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)
World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Educational and academic bodies

Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme
Community Religions Project, University of Leeds
The Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts at the University of Wales Trinity St David
Islamic Foundation
National Association of SACREs
OneSpirit Interfaith Foundation
Religious Education Council of England and Wales
Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter
The University of Lincoln Multi-Faith Chaplaincy
Wales Association of SACREs
Woolf Institute

National and regional inter faith organisations

Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
Interfaith Scotland
Inter-faith Council for Wales/Cyngor Rhyngffydd Cymru
Faiths Forum for London
North East Regional Faiths Network
South East England Faith Forum
All Faiths Network for the UK
Children of Abraham (Imams and Rabbis Council of the United Kingdom)
Christian Muslim Forum
Christians Aware Interfaith Programme
Council of Christians and Jews
Council of Dharmic Faiths
East of England Faiths Agency
Hindu Christian Forum
Interfaith Alliance UK
International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
International Interfaith Centre
Joseph Interfaith Foundation
London Boroughs Faiths Network
London Inter Faith Centre
London Society of Jews and Christians

Maimonides Interfaith Foundation
 Multi-Faith Centre at the University of
 Derby
 Religions for Peace (UK)
 Scriptural Reasoning
 St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation
 and Peace
 St Philip's Centre for Study and
 Engagement in a Multi Faith Society
 Three Faiths Forum
 United Religions Initiative (UK)
 Westminster Interfaith
 Women's Interfaith Network
 World Congress of Faiths

Local inter faith groups

Altrincham Inter Faith Group
 Learning Together, Living in Harmony
 (Aylesbury)
 Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum
 Barnet Multi-Faith Forum
 Bedford Council of Faiths
 Birmingham Council of Faiths
 Blackpool Faith Forum
 Bolton Interfaith Council
 Faith Links (Bournemouth and Poole)
 Bradford Concord Interfaith Society
 Brent Multi-Faith Forum
 Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact
 Group
 Bristol Inter Faith Group
 Bristol Multi-Faith Forum
 Building Bridges in Burnley
 Calderdale Interfaith Council
 Cambridge Inter-Faith Group
 Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action
 Cheltenham Inter Faith
 Cleveland and Tees Valley Inter Faith Group
 Cornwall Faiths Forum
 Coventry Multi-Faith Forum
 Crawley Interfaith Network
 Faiths Together in Croydon
 Cumbria Interfaith Forum
 Devon Faith and Belief Forum
 Dudley Borough Interfaith Network
 Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum
 Exeter Faith and Belief Group
 Gateshead Inter Faith Forum
 Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief
 Network
 Harrow Interfaith
 Hastings and District Interfaith Forum
 Hertsmere Forum of Faiths
 Hillingdon Inter Faith Network

Horsham Interfaith Forum
 Hounslow Friends of Faith
 Hull and East Riding Interfaith
 Inter Faith Isle of Man
 Islington Faiths Forum
 Keighley Interfaith Group
 Kettering Interfaith Forum
 Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
 Inter-Faith Forum
 Faiths Together in Lambeth
 Lancashire Forum of Faiths
 Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship
 Leeds Faiths Forum
 Leicester Council of Faiths
 Interfaith Forum for Leicestershire
 Loughborough Council of Faiths
 Luton Council of Faiths
 Faith Network for Manchester
 Mansfield Interfaith Group
 Medway Inter Faith Action Forum
 Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)
 Milton Keynes Council of Faiths
 Newcastle Council of Faiths
 Newham Association of Faiths
 North Herts Faith Forum
 North Kent Council for Inter Faith Relations
 – Kent Thameside
 North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council
 North Lincolnshire Multi Faith Partnership
 North Staffordshire Forum of Faiths
 Northampton Inter Faith Forum
 Norwich InterFaith Link
 Nottingham Inter Faith Council
 Oldham Inter Faith Forum
 Building Bridges Pendle – Interfaith
 Community Project
 Peterborough Inter-Faith Council
 Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural
 Diversity
 Portsmouth Inter Faith Forum
 Preston Faith Forum
 Redbridge Faith Forum
 Rochdale Multi Faith Partnership
 Rugby Inter Faith Forum
 Salford Interfaith Network
 Sheffield Inter Faith
 Solihull Faiths Forum
 South London Inter Faith Group
 South Shropshire Interfaith Forum
 Southampton Council of Faiths
 Southwark Multi Faith Forum
 Stafford and District Friends of Faith
 Stratford-on-Avon Interfaith Forum
 Swindon Inter Faith Group

Faiths United (Tameside)
Torbay Interfaith Forum
Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum
Wakefield Interfaith Network
Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum
Warwick District Faiths Forum
Watford Inter Faith Association
Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group
Westminster Faith Exchange
William Campbell-Taylor (City of London
Interfaith)
Windsor and Maidenhead Community
Forum
Wisbech Interfaith Forum
Interfaith Wolverhampton
Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum
York Interfaith Group

As at AGM July 2019

Front cover photographs

Top left: Major Samuel Edgar (Salvation Army), the Revd Philip Brooks (United Reformed Church in the UK), Ven Kalugamuwe Kassapa Thero (Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB) and Valerie Skottowe (Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group)

Top right: Penny Smith-Orr (Faiths Together in Croydon), Lynne Broadbent (Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action) and Kawser Akhtar (South East England Faiths Forum)

Middle left: Charanjit AjitSingh (Hounslow Friends of Faith) and Sonoo Malik (Harrow Interfaith)

Middle right: Malcolm Deboo (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe)

Bottom left: Cllr Tom Aditya (Bristol Multi Faith Forum) and Mike Stygal (Pagan Federation and Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action)

Bottom right: Discussion group participants

Back cover photograph

Launch of *Inter Faith Week: Stories from 2018, Inspiration for 2019*

Credit: All photos were taken by Paresh Solanki for IFN

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