

Faith communities and Covid-19: learning from the journey



Report on the 2021 National Meeting

RESILIENCE/CONNECTION/COVID-19/ACTION/COOPERATION/
SCOTLAND/SERVICE/INTER FAITH/TEMPLE/COMPASSION/
BELIEF/COMMUNITIES/VOLUNTEERING/KINDNESS/SERVICE/
CONNECTION/WELFARE/EQUALITY/FRONTLINE/NHS/FAITH/
CHURCH/COOPERATION/ACTION/HOPE/SUPPORT/SCHOOLS/
MANDIR/KEY WORKERS/MOSQUE/EMERGENCY RESPONSE/
VACCINES/RESILIENCE/ACTION/ENGLAND/COOPERATION/
SYNAGOGUE/IMPACTS/SERVICE/GURDWARA/DIGITAL/HOPE/
KINDNESS/ISOLATION/CONNECTION/COMMUNICATIONS/
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ACTION/MUTUAL AID/FAITH/SERVICE/NORTHERN IRELAND/
KINDNESS/UK/SOCIAL DISTANCING/FAITH/SELF ISOLATION/
PRAYER/HOPE/VIHARA/PUBLIC HEALTH/CONNECTION/
BEREAVEMENT/REMEMBRANCE/HOPE/FUNERALS/KINDNESS/
BUILDING BACK/WELLBEING/CONSULTATION/FAITH/ACTION/
MESSAGING/COOPERATION/CONNECTION/HOPE/KINDNESS



Faith communities and Covid-19: learning from the journey

Report on the 2021 National Meeting

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Welcome from Co-Chairs and setting of scene

The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark and Narendra Waghela Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Good morning and welcome. It is great to be with you all. I am looking forward to a good day. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Jonathan Clark. I'm the Church of England Bishop of Croydon as well as one of the Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. I shall be introducing the day and then handing over to my fellow Co-Chair, Narendra Waghela who will be chairing the morning session. I will then be chairing the afternoon session.

For this year's National Meeting, we are focussing on faith communities and COVID-19 and on what we've learned together from the journey so far. We have a wonderfully varied list of people attending and I look forward to our learning together. We shall be remembering together those who have died from COVID-19, those who continue to suffer and those who care for them. We shall be celebrating the wide variety of service that has been offered by faith communities and the ways in which people have demonstrated their resilience in tough times. We shall also be thinking about some of the key issues that have come up, and learning together, and looking towards how we can work together and separately in our different communities and across faith communities towards a reopening of society and the road ahead for our future.

We have an excellent array of presenters and facilitators. If it were not for time I would run through the whole list! Thank you to all those who will be contributing

today. We are really grateful for your time and your expertise. On the original programme you may have noticed that there was a minute's silence scheduled for the beginning of the meeting. As you know, we have now moved that to midday in order to join in with the national moment of quiet to reflect and pray and remember those who have died during the last year, and also all that has been suffered and all that has been done.

Some housekeeping points before we go any further. We are, as you can see, on Zoom in 'meeting' format. Please therefore do remain muted unless you are speaking to the meeting because even small amounts of background noise can affect the ability of some to hear. Speakers will be spotlighted, as I am being at the moment, so that they appear as the main image. If you need to ask a question please use the electronic 'raise your hand' function on Zoom. For those of you who have not done that before, it can be found by clicking on the 'reactions' button on your screen. You can also find it on the 'participants list' if you can't see your 'reactions' button. That will bring you to the attention of the co-hosts so they know you wish to speak. If you're dialling in on a phone, you can mute and unmute by dialling *6 and you can raise and lower your hand by dialling *9. 'Chat' is open so please do feel free to chat with one another. But if you want to say something that's part of the official discussion please raise your hand and speak, because the Chat is just for informal communication, it's not part of the official record and won't

be in the note of the day. If you do want to share something then when you put it in the Chat then do give it a heading saying 'Experience Share' so that we can distinguish it from general chatting to one another and we can pick those things up.

We will be taking some screengrab photographs. If you don't want to be included please let Ashley Beck know, preferably via Chat. We will be recording this meeting and hopefully using parts of it on IFN's website in due course. We encourage those of you who love tweeting to use the hashtag #IFNFaithandCovid and to tag @IFNetUK. If you quote anybody please ask their permission.

Given the very full programme, we will be giving 2 minute warnings to speakers. And that 2 minute warning will then be followed by inviting you courteously but definitely to stop! So, if you are a speaker, please do be prepared for that. We shall be trying to be courteous to everybody and make sure that everyone has their time. We hope that everything will run as smoothly as possible, technically speaking. If I or Narendra lose a connection at any point the other will take over chairing. Similarly, we welcome across the network a huge variety of different experience and backgrounds which may lead to differences of opinions as well. We invite those to be expressed in a spirit of courteousness and friendliness as we move on and do our work together. I'm now very happy to hand over to Narendra Waghela to chair our morning session.

Narendra Waghela: Good morning everyone. Thank you, Bishop Jonathan, for that welcome. COVID-19 has created history. 2020 will go down in history and all generations will remember it for a long, long time to come. Lots of positives have come out of this journey and we have been united in doing our best together. The virus is totally invisible, not seen to the naked eye, but it has put the whole world on pause. It does not know race or religion and has no boundaries at all. But, as someone once said, 'the show must go

on' and human nature is resilient. I look forward to the time when we can meet again with friends and family and colleagues, and can visit sports grounds, theatres and cinemas –and even travel to sunny destinations.

Stepping up to serve: sharing stories of faith and inter faith responses to need

Major Pam Knuckey

Assistant Director (Research), Research and Development, with

Major David Evans

Territorial and Inter Faith Officer, The Salvation Army UK

Narendra Waghela: Our first session this morning is 'Stepping up to serve: sharing stories of faith and interfaith responses to need'. The response of faith communities to local needs during the pandemic has been remarkable. This is the moment to lift them up and celebrate this. We have 3 sets of 10-minute presentations. These are from The Salvation Army, Nottingham Sewa Day, and Interfaith Scotland together with the Sikh Foodbank. After each presentation, depending on the time, we should be able to have one or two questions. Then when all presenters have spoken I hope we will also have a little time for general discussion.

We are pleased to welcome the first speakers Major Pam Knuckey and Major David Evans of the Salvation Army. They will be speaking about The Salvation Army's response during the pandemic including through its congregations and partnerships. Major Knuckey is The Salvation Army's Assistant Director for Research and works on its research and development side. Major Evans is a Territorial and Inter Faith Officer for the Salvation Army.

Major Pam Knuckey: Thank you very much, Narendra. It is great to be with you this morning.

Our Research and Development team was tasked with answering the questions, 'How are we doing? Will we do? And will we reimagine mission differently as a result of the pandemic?' We undertook various research activities from April to September 2020. Today I'm sharing highlights from three of those:

- a literature review on emerging missional trends during the pandemic;
- frontline phone and online surveys with our frontline church leaders and centre managers to understand their experience and thinking during and just after the first lockdown; and
- a PESTLE[S] analysis looking at the external political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental, and spiritual landscape to reveal COVID-19's impact.

Starting with what was learned around congregations, the literature review identified 8 over-arching themes. Above all the review has emphasised the need to love and serve your neighbour by socially distancing and following government guidelines and by risking self to properly support those in need. Beyond that, mission looked like: challenging

inequalities; pointing people to the promise of a better world bolstered by constant prayer – especially creating space to listen to God and discern God’s heart; taking time to lament pain and suffering; being present as God’s presence in local communities; getting out of buildings; listening authentically to marginalised people and challenging western individualism; being imaginative and innovative in mission; allowing the Holy Spirit to move the church out of its comfort zone; and proclaiming the good news of Jesus.

From PESTLE[S] we saw chaplaincy emerge as a key engagement point with the public during the crisis, bridging a gap between individuals and institutional church.

99% of our phone respondents had undertaken both outward facing activities, such as food parcels or meal distribution, shopping, crisis support, schools ministry, drop in, employment support and pastoral support to their community, and provided pastoral support to their regular attendees, staff, and volunteers. 89% reported engaging in food parcel distribution directly or in partnership with other agencies.

73% reported undertaking online worship. In some settings this attracted a wider audience than reached pre-lockdown but the level of engagement was unclear. Over 50% found preparation of online worship challenging and congregants’ lack of online access or knowledge was challenging in over two thirds of settings. The most cited type of collaboration taking place at churches was with their local headquarters or other Salvation Army churches (90%), followed by collaboration with at least one of a range of community groups, agencies, or other denominations (89%).

When asked by phone what mission meant to them at this time, 42% of church leaders described some form of responding to need, with 24% of them emphasising the church’s responsibility to know the specific needs of their community. Responding to need was closely followed by describing

mission as extending Jesus to everyone, the need to proclaim the good news, and a more inward-looking emphasis on pastoral care to their current congregation. When asked what they felt God was saying to them about mission in the future, 23% of church leaders felt God was telling them to reassess, slow down, reflect, and listen to Him. There was also a sense of needing to get out of buildings and into the community to focus on building relationships, being brave and creative. The top 10 responses reflected the need to change either partially or completely.

Turning to social mission delivered through our contracted services, the most commonly cited activities varied by the specific service type. The most cited form of collaboration taking place within our anti-trafficking and modern slavery, employment and homelessness services was with a range of community organisations, whereas all our older people services have been collaborating with health services. When asked by phone what mission meant to them at this time our contracted services staff most commonly said that it was supporting people. 17% articulated a need to keep people safe as key, while 23% described it as being there for people, journeying alongside them. They also felt that God was telling them to slow down, reflect, and listen to God, to be adaptable, creative, and to share the love of God with others, especially through loving their neighbours.

Challenges in our contracted services included building relationships with service users, meeting their unmet needs, supporting them with life skills, and maintaining a sense of safety. Over 80% have found it challenging to use their building spaces during lockdown.

Looking across the board, 60% of online respondents said their workload had increased despite 80% saying that their programme had reduced. Staff being furloughed and volunteers shielding reduced people resources in some cases. Scores for physical health and wellbeing among frontline leaders and managers fell

below pre-pandemic norms. Wellbeing, particularly mental health, is a concern for church leaders, managers, staff, congregants and service users. Church leaders who have provided care and support in stressful times are recognised as particularly vulnerable, and we may see a delayed impact on them. Half of our online respondents found innovation challenging.

Other key complex interlinked issues are that geographic, socio-economic, gender, age, ethnic, digital and environmental inequalities have been compounded or exacerbated, with long- and short-term contributors to inequalities like domestic violence increasing in prevalence. A shift from volunteering to mutual aid schemes has emerged. Brexit's long-term impact is unknown but analysis suggests challenges mirroring the pandemic have emerged, increasing their extent and scope. Rough sleeping figures are rising again. There is opportunity to capitalise on the environmental gains of lockdown one. We found that due to COVID's complex impact it is vital that we consider the interconnected nature of any actions. We recognise that engaging in partnership working is key and any decisions must be preceded by prayerful reflection.

David is now going to share some specific examples of inter faith activity we were involved in.

Major David Evans: My responsibility covers the whole of the UK and so I looked at Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic where we also work. The variety of responses has been incredible. This has included encouraging people to take vaccines, which has been a joint exercise with different faith groups, in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Ireland.

One of our aims during COVID-19 is to encourage people to take the vaccine – particularly in the BAME groupings which have been sometimes reluctant to do so.

In the West Midlands the police authority has put together an inter faith working

group, with the Salvation Army as part of this. In the Birmingham area food parcels came up in every conversation I had. The Salvation Army in Cannock has come up with an incredible innovation of a school uniform bank as opposed to foodbank. So deprived families who haven't got the money for school uniforms can access them through the bank once they've been cleaned and ironed. In other areas, in Raynes Park for instance, a Salvation Army officer has spoken with the local mosque and has been invited by their ladies group to talk about vaccinations. I could go on and on about that right across the country.

In Scotland an interesting partnership has developed between the mosque in Kilmarnock and the Ayr Salvation Army. The public have been incredibly generous with food parcels, far more than the Ayr Salvation Army could deal with alone. So they got in touch with the various other faith groups such as the Kilmarnock mosque. Every 2–3 weeks, sometimes less, they take up to 2 car loads of food which is not required in Ayr and it is given out in Kilmarnock. In a conversation that the officer had with the imam they were interested to learn that the food that they receive is being distributed among everybody. It's not just Christians helping Christians or Muslims helping Muslims, or Sikhs helping Sikhs but it's helping everybody in the community.

In Ireland there's a lot going on. The Salvation Army is the first faith responder to the emergency. When the morgues are sadly full, the Salvation Army is contacted and they in turn contact the other faith groups. Some of the faith groups are quite small in that part of the world and therefore they feel quite lonely. So when they lose somebody, to then be able to have someone else there on the spot helping them gives incredible relief. Both the universities of Dublin (Eire) and Queen's University in Belfast (NI) have done surveys in their communities during COVID-19 about child neglect and abuse, and these are readily available in the very much evolving multi faith groups relationships in

both countries, Northern Ireland and the Republic.

This is just the surface of all the inter faith contacts and I've not covered every part of the British Isles. It's been quite encouraging to see the way that relationships and trust have developed during the Pandemic and that increasingly that we're working together and supporting each other. Thanks be to the glory of God. Amen.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much Major Pam and Major David.

Stepping up to serve: sharing stories of faith and inter faith responses to need

Gurdeep Kaur

Co-Founder, Sikh Foodbank and

Dr Maureen Sier

Director Interfaith Scotland and IFN Trustee

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

Narendra Waghela: Next we are pleased to have a contribution from Scotland. This is from Gurdeep Kaur, Co-Founder of the Sikh Foodbank, and Dr Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland. Gurdeep is speaking in place of her colleague Charandeep Singh. She will be giving us an insight into one of the important initiatives that has emerged to serve the community during COVID-19, in this instance in Scotland's Sikh community. Then Maureen will be sharing something of the inspiring response from Scotland. If time permits we shall have some questions afterwards.

Gurdeep Kaur: Thank you Narendra. It is nice to see everyone virtually. My name is Gurdeep and I'm here from the Sikh Foodbank.

The Sikh Foodbank was established almost 12 months ago through Sikhs in Scotland. It's not a service we had initially. It came about because of the pandemic, the lockdown, and people, such as the elderly and vulnerable, not being able to get out. The team considered how to provide support using the Sikh ethos of *Langar*, where we provide free food at all gurdwaras for anyone that wants to come. The gurdwaras were closed so we had to decide how to reimagine this.

We decided to set up the Sikh Foodbank. If you have not heard of us, we are on social media <https://www.facebook.com/TheSikhFoodBank>. Instead of cooking and serving hot meals in the gurdwara we provided weekly food parcels. These included all the usual groceries, particularly fresh food rather than tinned, which we ensured was durable for a week. We began doing this twice a week which just shows you the kind of demand that was there for the food parcels. This was because some were suddenly out of work and some were not able to travel. The project has been running throughout the last year. We now provide parcels on a weekly basis. We've delivered over 100,000 food parcels and hot meals. It just shows you the scale of people that we have supported through the last 12 months.

The Sikh faith teaches us to support others, no matter what their background or faith. 99% of our users come from outside the Sikh community, and the volunteers range from the young to senior. People from all walks of life were participating in giving up their time to support the Sikh Foodbank. Young people also used the volunteering time to contribute to their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

During the summer we were able to build a multi faith partnership with Queen's Baptist Church in Glasgow. We were based there for 3 to 4 months. The church was

able to offer the space we needed as it was not at that time able to be used for services. Everyone came together to support each other; faith wasn't an issue. One of the chefs within the church provided the hot meals for the homeless people and then we delivered these to a hotel where homeless people were placed during the pandemic. So it really was a collaboration.

During the year a lot of people missed out on celebrating religious festivals in the usual way. So, to ensure people still felt that they were recognised, within the food parcels we included Easter eggs during Easter, halal food for Eid, Indian sweets for Vaisakhi, and candles for Diwali. To end the year, we delivered just over 150 Christmas parcels, and presents for young children, where their families were being supported, and for the parents and older people. Christmas is a time where everyone often comes together regardless of their faith. People were not able to gather so the presents were just one small thing we could do to make the celebrations more normal.

We are very glad to be supported by Interfaith Scotland, particularly by its Director, who will be speaking shortly. She has personally visited our base and provided donations with her grandson. I think collaboration is the reason that the Sikh Foodbank has succeeded so well. The team itself – the volunteers and the drivers – take the burden off people, so there's no stigma about receiving the parcels. We have been working in Glasgow and Edinburgh and around Scotland.

We have been recognised with a Pride of Scotland award and also a Points of Light award from the Prime Minister. We don't provide the support for the recognition; we just want to support vulnerable people at a difficult time.

Thank you again for inviting me to be part of this meeting. You can find out more about us from social media.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much.

Dr Maureen Sier: Thank you to the presenters this morning. It has been awe inspiring to see how faith communities have worked together across the whole of the UK during the pandemic. It has been a challenging time for everyone but in so many ways it has shown the power and resilience of faith, and how at the heart of these communities is the desire to serve and to help others. The Sikh Foodbank in Scotland is just one example of how people have pulled together and how there has been such great faith collaboration.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be working with the faith communities of Scotland, particularly so during this challenging time. Very early on in the pandemic the Scottish Government asked Interfaith Scotland if it would be willing to manage two grant funds. [Slide 2] The first of these was the immediate Covid Relief Fund. The Scottish Government had recognised that faith communities were at the heart of community and were in a key position to help the most vulnerable, isolated, lonely and struggling, at the grassroots level. The Fund enabled faith communities to apply for a small amount of seed funding to help people on the ground.

We were able to support a lot of projects run by different faith communities – 22 Christian, 7 Muslim, 2 Hindu, 2 Jewish, 2 Buddhist, 3 Sikh and 2 Baha'i – as well as 7 local inter faith groups and 10 community organisations. [Slide 3] We had to develop a structure for distributing the grants. We only gave money to those who were trusted partners, that we knew would report back on their work and would be able to evidence how the money was spent. The projects included food and medicine deliveries, making masks for NHS workers (because there were none at some point early on in the pandemic), assisting communities to purchase professional Zoom accounts so that they could better support their respective communities, providing phone in services, providing laptops for refugees and additional support for the digitally deprived, and so much more. These projects took place across the whole of Scotland.

A short video was shown. [Slide 4]
This included clips from two Interfaith Scotland videos – ‘Faith communities working to serve others’ and ‘FM Nicola Sturgeon’s message for faith communities’. Both can be found at <https://interfaithscotland.org/resources/videos>.

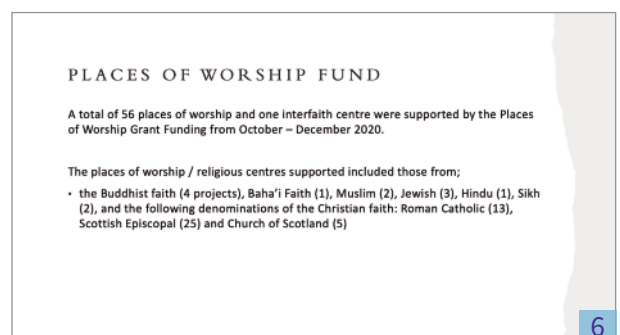
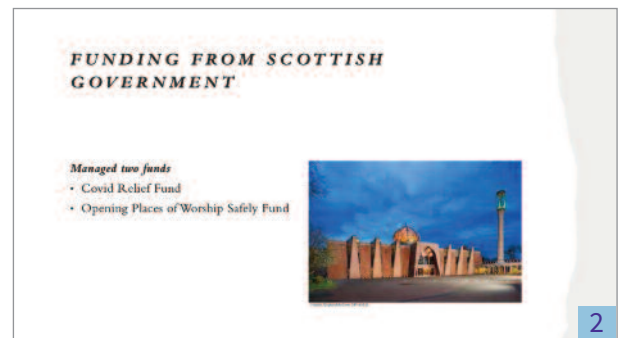
There were numerous positive comments that came from faith communities, local inter faith groups and individuals across the whole of Scotland. [Slide 5] One comment from an asylum seeker, ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you – you’ve given me my life back and I can now connect with the lifeline that is my faith community!’, shows how powerful it is to step up and serve and we were delighted that we could be a conduit to help as many faith

communities as possible support the grassroots of society.

The second fund that we administered was the Places of Worship Fund. [Slide 6] Faith communities need their places of worship very often just for their mental wellbeing and for connection. There have been brief windows of opportunity during the pandemic when places of worship have been able to open. The Fund was to enable places of worship to open up safely, providing PPE, screens, signposting, washing facilities, and so forth. 56 places of worship were assisted through the Fund.

It has been a great privilege to see all this inter faith work going on across Scotland and particularly in service of others.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much Maureen.



Stepping up to serve: sharing stories of faith and inter faith responses to need

Hetvi Parekh

Sewa Day Team Leader Nottingham

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

Narendra Waghela: Next, we are pleased to welcome Hetvi Parekh from Sewa Day. As you may know, Sewa Day's volunteers have been carrying out numerous helpful initiatives during the pandemic. Hetvi is the Sewa Day Team Leader for Nottingham where volunteers continue to work at full throttle to respond to local needs. I hope that it will not embarrass Hetvi if I mention her recent Points of Light Award from the Prime Minister for her role in this. Hetvi will be giving an insight into her team's work which has involved volunteers of many backgrounds, including from local faith communities.

Hetvi Parekh: Thank you for the warm welcome. As Narendra has said, I am the Nottingham team leader for the national charity Sewa Day, which is currently led by Mr Deepak Pathak.

What is Sewa? Sewa means 'service', service without any expectation in return, serving the community selflessly. It is a universal concept about being kind to the family and the community around you. Sewa Day is a Hindu-inspired charity and the main principle is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum', which means 'the whole world is one family'. We serve the whole world in a selfless manner in whatever ways we can. These are the 3 strands to Sewa Day: we bring a little joy where none exists; we help

to relieve hardship and poverty; and we help the environment. [Slide 2]

When COVID-19 began, Sewa Day brought people together from about 30 areas of the country to respond to the pandemic and to meet the needs of local communities. They came together through the 'Help a Neighbour' campaign. [Slide 3] There were 3 strands to this campaign. The first of these strands was 'Replenish the foodbanks'. [Slide 4] Throughout the country volunteers came together to replenish the foodbanks in their local areas. This was a main focus because when the pandemic began foodbank shelves were empty. The second strand of the campaign was 'Spread some joy'. [Slide 5] In this strand we connected with local care homes and sent pictures, stories, and poems written by children to the residents, because they were isolated and they couldn't go out anywhere. The third strand of the project was 'Care for our carers'. [Slide 6] Through this we helped frontline NHS workers with food, PPE, hand sanitisers, Easter eggs, and anything that would make their lives easier whilst they were saving lives. In Nottingham we did a special project to support a local hospital. [Slide 7] They wanted to make respite rooms for the staff there, so Sewa Day in Nottingham arranged for chairs, cushions and other furniture for the respite room.

The impact in Nottingham in the last one year has been tremendous. [Slide 8] For instance, we have helped 10 foodbanks at least on a fortnightly basis, delivered 50 tons

of food and cooked over 25,000 hot meals. The meals have been cooked in community kitchens and temples for frontline workers, homeless people and those in need. We are still continuing to cook these meals, though they are now more for those in need in the community than for frontline workers. We have also helped 14 schools to date, with food, stationery and books throughout the last year.

At Christmas we filled up 900 shoe boxes (challenging to do in one hall with everyone socially distancing and wearing masks!) and distributed these to people in the community. At February half term we distributed 172 food parcels and last year we distributed 1,483 Easter eggs and 600 packs of popcorn. This year we have continued the Easter campaign, with 1,400 eggs distributed to over 30 charities, schools, community groups, faith groups, and so forth in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. We have also delivered 300 art and craft bags, because children need experiences as well as food. We also knew that a lot of people were coming to foodbanks but did not have any money to feed their pets. So, we managed to get 2 pallets of pet food for various foodbanks and Nottinghamshire County Council. [Slide 9]

We are very proud to say that to date our 'Spread the joy' campaign has reached 23 care homes and 2 hospitals in Nottingham city and Nottinghamshire. We have distributed 750 activity packs to over 12 schools in the city and county. 25 international students have been supported as part of this. Many of them are away from home, have lost their jobs and are still struggling financially and we continue to support them. We have had 4 MPs, 10 councillors and over 100 volunteers involved to date. We are very lucky and are very grateful to be supported by a number of communities, such as the West Bridgford Methodist Church, Communities Working Together, Hindu temple Sai Dham and the Rotary Club. Across the last year we have liaised with and supported over 30 community groups.

This next slide shows some pictures. [Slide 10] These are of: the Christmas campaign, with our Christmas helpers, our elves, packing boxes with their masks on; the pet food which the County Council collected on their big trucks; the Easter campaign where people are packing the art and craft bags and Easter eggs; the half term food parcels that we did for schools and the activity packs (we did 750 of these, each with contents worth £15).

There are some further photos of this next slide. [Slide 11] These are: Haven Church Food Bank, where we are distributing the activity packs with their local MP Darren Hendry; the Priory Trinity School; the Salvation Army; the Crime Commissioner, helping us to cook some food and pack it; our volunteers out on a very, very cold day, serving food in the town centre; and the distribution of the activity packs to schools in inner city areas of Nottingham.

We also have plans to continue with projects after COVID-19. [Slide 12] We shall be continuing our various community kitchens where we continue to cook 350 meals which are distributed to the YMCA, people in the inner city and some other areas of the county. We will continue serving hot meals, once a week, every Sunday, from 5pm to 7pm in the town centre. We will continue to replenish foodbanks at least on a fortnightly basis. We are continuing to work with schools, on the basis of them telling us what support they need, such as food parcels and books. A few weeks ago we supported 3 schools in Nottingham with over 325 books as part of World Book Day. We will also be supporting various other charities with perishable food redistribution of food to minimise food wastage. We shall continue our annual Christmas shoe box campaign, our summer activities, our art and craft bags and our Easter eggs campaign.

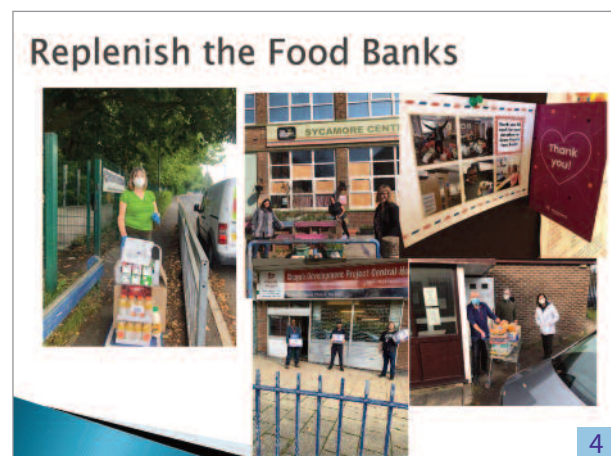
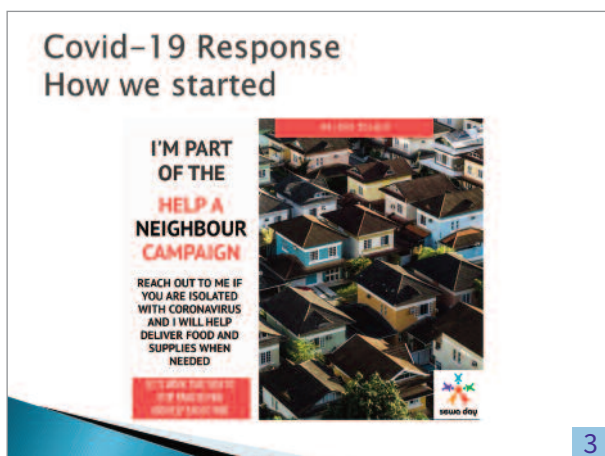
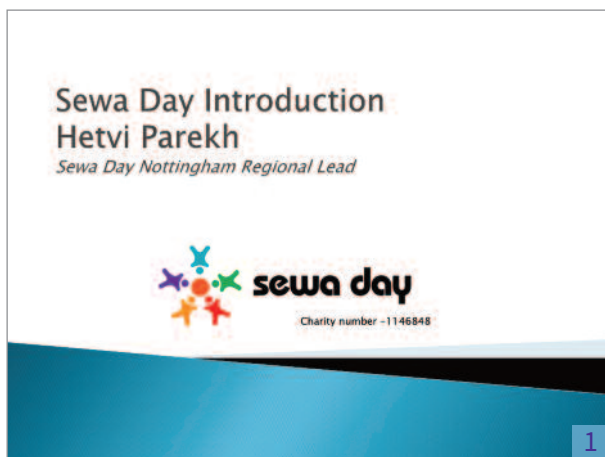
We are a Hindu inspired charity with volunteers from different faiths including Sikhs, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, serving people across different faiths, cultures, and ethnicities. When I sat down to write this presentation, I had not talked

about this aspect before. I realised that across the last year we have been doing so much work where different faith communities have been involved.

This is our journey so far. We are not going to stop. Nationally we will continue

because we're a national organisation. But in Nottingham too we will continue in our own small way.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much, Hetvi.



Hospital respite rooms project & Easter Eggs Campaign



7

Impact in Nottingham

- 10 food banks/community groups replenished at least on a fortnightly basis (50 tonnes in the last one year)
- 25,000 meals cooked for our frontliners, homeless people and needy
- 14 schools helped to date- stationery and food
- 900 shoeboxes filled with presents during Christmas
- 172 food parcels for half term
- 1483 Easter Eggs and 600 packs of popcorn in 2020 and 1400 eggs and 300 arts and craft bags in 2021

8

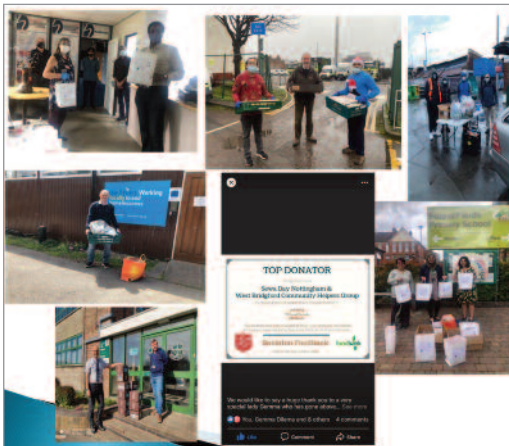
Impact in Nottingham (continued)

- 2 pallets of Pet Food for various foodbanks and Nottinghamshire County Council
- 23 care homes and 2 hospitals recipients of Spread Some Joy Campaign photos, poems and care appreciation packages
- 750 activity packs distributed to 12 schools in City and County (2 schools in Rushcliffe)
- 95 international students supported with hot meals and groceries
- Engagements with 4 MPs and 10 councillors
- Over 100 volunteers involved
- Supported by WBCH, West Bridgford Methodist Church, Communities Working Together, Hindu Temple, Sai Dham, Morrisons and Rotary Club of Rushcliffe.
- Liaison with over 30 community groups/charities/schools

9



10



11

Regular Projects– Post Covid Plan

- Two Community Kitchens – Carlton and Basford cooking 350 meals per week and serving YMCA, Framework, vulnerable people.
- Serving hot meals in Trinity Square and Sneinton square to homeless people on a weekly basis
- Replenishing Food banks
- Liaison with schools and supporting schools with food parcels, stationery etc
- Supporting charities with perishable food and redistribution of food to minimise food wastage
- Christmas Shoebox Campaign
- Summer Activity Packs Campaign
- Easter Eggs Campaign

12

We are a Hindu inspired charity with volunteers from different faiths including Sikhs, Christians, Jews and Muslims serving people across different faiths/cultures/ethnicities

Some of our regular projects include supporting faith based food banks, schools and community groups.

Thank you for listening to me.
Happy to answer any questions.

You can follow us on:
www.facebook.com/sewadaynotts
twitter- Sewadaynotts



13

Faith communities and COVID-19

Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE

Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Narendra Waghela: The next session is Faith Communities and COVID-19. The IFN Executive Director and staff team have been working hard since the beginning of the pandemic to keep the member bodies and others in touch with developments and to highlight through meetings, social media and other routes, the important work that you have all been doing.

IFN's Executive Director, Harriet Crabtree, will now speak about some of the issues that are being explored during the day.

Dr Harriet Crabtree: Thank you Chair. May I add my thanks to the first presenters for their wonderful presentations which have given us a real flavour of how their organisations have been responding.

As you will imagine from the length of this presentation, it will not be an overview of every aspect of faith communities' and COVID. Rather, what I be doing in the next 10 or so minutes is lifting up some of the dimensions of the faith and inter faith response to COVID and relating those to our plenary discussions and workshops today. I will be doing so under the following headings:

- Responding, in service, to community needs
- Death, illness and deprivation
- Worship in a time of pandemic
- Public health messaging and vaccination

- Solidarity
- The time ahead

1 Responding, in service, to community needs

First of all, responding in service to community needs. In planning the day, we chose to begin with stories about the value of service in action and we have just heard about some significant examples: Salvation Army responses, a Sewa Day initiative in Nottingham, and the activities of the Sikh Foodbank in Scotland.

A striking phenomenon during the pandemic has been the flowering of volunteering and the high number of people of different faith backgrounds volunteering. There have been so many wonderful initiatives, from the Baba Balak Nath Group in Swindon started by a small group of friends, to the wide range of responses from the Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and other communities throughout the UK.

A number of initiatives, such as the North Belfast Foodbank, which operates out of a Presbyterian Church and a Worcester Muslim Welfare Association Ramadan foodbank drive, have been linked to existing foodbanks such as those run by the Trussell Trust. Some initiatives have been carried out by groups from particular faiths or places of worship. Quite a number have seen collaboration, for example groups collecting food for a foodbank run or operating from a place of another faith. As

well as responding to food needs, faith groups have worked to support both their own members and the wider community through routes such as help with getting to medical appointments and getting prescriptions.

During Inter Faith Week 2020, a large number of activities focused on the pandemic and how people had been responding. You can see on Twitter and Facebook some of the many examples we shared, from an online faith group's discussion about COVID with Norwich Interfaith Link to a special series of videos from Wellsprings Together highlighting the contribution of faith communities in West Yorkshire during the pandemic.

2 Death, illness and deprivation

I have begun with the acts of service or, as some have called them, 'acts of kindness'. But these inspiring acts of kindness, which have been demonstrated across communities, have shone against an often dark backdrop.

The last 12 months have been hard ones, marked by restriction and loss, with faith communities working day by day to respond to loss of life, and struggle, and damaged health. They've continued to support the whole of society with terrible losses. Among these the most profound deprivation has perhaps been the inability of people to be present with loved ones in hospital and care homes who have needed their touch, their presence. In such contexts, the kindness of medical staff and the vital work of chaplains has been tremendously important. We shall hear more about health care chaplaincy in a time of COVID in a workshop later this morning.

Faith communities have also been unable to hold funerals in the usual way. Saying farewell, preparing bodies for death, ensuring dignified disposal of the body, and observing mourning rituals in the traditional ways – everything has been affected and it takes a terrible toll on the bereaved. We'll be hearing more also about

this in one of the workshops. We'll also be hearing from our next two plenary presenters how some communities with significant membership from black and minority ethnic communities have suffered with disproportionate impact, for reasons explored in studies such as those by Public Health England. The sharpness of loss has been acute, with doctors and nurses very visible among the early deaths. And even in communities who have not had this additional impact the time has been so hard. Like all others in society people of faith have undergone months of deprivation of the company of most friends and family, disruption and anxiety in their work and education, limitation of movement, children unable to attend school, weddings cancelled, postponed social events, or things held in eerie, empty, pandemic-safe spaces, digital divide, anxiety when out and about on public transport, shops and other crowded places, loneliness, domestic violence and sexual abuse, uncertainty of a fundamental kind and in some cases poverty. There will be reflections of faith and inter faith responses to domestic violence and loneliness in one of the afternoon's workshops.

3 Worship in a time of pandemic

In normal times, places of worship are for many one place of constancy and consolation. Not so, for the most part this last year. Opening. Closing. Opening. Never in most of our lifetimes have we imagined that going into a place of worship should be abnormal. The UK and devolved governments swung rapidly into action to consult with faith communities through special meetings and roundtables and, in England also a Places of Worship taskforce, with the aim of ensuring safe use of places of worship.

Within weeks of the first lockdown many faith communities had developed online liturgical offerings. Places of worship throughout the country experimented with Facebook and other types of livestreaming, many wrestling for the first time with such practicalities as use of tripods and getting the right camera angles. Bar and bat

mitzvahs streamed from home. Arti was beamed into people's living rooms. The weekly sermon arrived on YouTube. Festivals have come and gone. Virtual Vaisakhi. Digital Diwali. Electronic Easter. Remote Ridvan. And Iftars over Zoom. You'll be hearing more about this in the digital workshops. A great deal of creativeness has come out of this and the real usefulness of digital communication is being explored. But there is no substitute for the meeting together in one space.

As more people return again to their places of worship they will become all too aware of some of the other challenges that places of worship have been facing because of COVID. These challenges include loss of income due to being unable to rent out rooms or to devotees not attending for regular worship or festivals and therefore not making their usual donations. We will hear more about some of the impacts of places of worship and other faith-based charities in one of the workshops this afternoon.

4 Public health messaging and vaccination

But let me return now to health. Across all faith communities, groups have worked with statutory agencies to respond to a wide range of public health issues and to promote safety messages, as well as to contribute on discussions on issues such as the ethics involved in deciding on order of vaccine receipt or being given ventilation. A ten minute rapid overview is not, however, the place to detail the many aspects of this – and the different ways that faith communities have been consulted in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. We have chosen today to focus on the issue of vaccination as that is of particular concern at this time.

In the face of misinformation and conspiracy theories, faith community organisations and faith leaders have been working to encourage vaccine take up. There have been campaigns within particular faiths and denominations, for example the Give Hope Campaign and a

combined campaign by a group of Hindu organisations. And in many areas such as Manchester and Sandwell, they have done this together.

Worship places have been hosting vaccine centres and pop up clinics, for example, the LDS Harborne Chapel in Birmingham, a number of English cathedrals, the BAPS Swaminarayan Neasden Temple, the Jamnia Madi Masjid in Halifax, a Church of Scotland kirk in Houston in Renfrewshire, a Jain Centre in Manchester, a Spiritualist Church in Stourbridge and gurdwaras in Bedford and Luton. There has also been a multi faith vaccine initiative, Vaxitaxi – a scheme set up by a Muslim and a Jewish doctor to bring a mobile vaccination unit to places of worship in West London.

In England, the UK Government has funded a major programme of work under the 'Community Champions' scheme, allocating over £23 million funding to 60 councils and voluntary groups to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and boost vaccine take up. Two charities, Strengthening Faith Institutions and Near Neighbours, have been funded to support councils in working with grassroots organisations and community leaders, to ensure that communities understand how the pandemic is being tackled and feel empowered to take action to keep themselves safe. We will be hearing more in the workshop on vaccination this morning.

5 Words and actions of solidarity

I have mentioned the messages of faith leaders together about health issues. Joint statements and programmes of encouragement have been a powerful part of the faith and inter faith response to COVID. The messages have not just been about specific medical issues, they have also been about standing together at this very difficult time.

Some of the symbolic statements have not been verbal. As well as video messages there have been physical creations expressing the journey together. An example of that is the pandemic quilt

created by York Interfaith, whose Chair will be speaking later today. Each local faith community contributed panels: their logo; a panel showing how a faith festival had to be celebrated in a different way to usual; and one to indicate how a rites of passage celebration had to be conducted in a different manner to usual. Images of this were widely shared. We will hear more about this in the workshop on solidarity and statements later this afternoon.

Concluding reflections

Although there remains great uncertainty about what lies ahead in terms of COVID's impact, it is clear that the last year has seen a remarkable contribution from faith communities. It has also seen learning which has both drawn on and strengthened faith communities' social capital and resilience. It has also accelerated in many respects faith communities' interaction and their joint action for the wellbeing of society. Looking to the future, faith communities and inter faith bodies have a key role to play as society 'builds back'.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much Harriet for covering so much in your excellent presentation.

A time of challenge

Shermara Fletcher

Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations, Churches Together in England

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

Narendra Waghela: We began today highlighting some of ways that faith communities everywhere have been responding to the needs during the pandemic. Following that we heard from Harriet about some of the other aspects of faith communities in the pandemic. As Harriet highlighted, a significant and disturbing aspect of many communities has been the unequal impact of COVID 19. That unequal impact has been felt in terms of mortality and illness and the issues of vaccination. The IFN Faith Communities Forum has discussed these as well as other issues. We are very pleased today to welcome Shermara Fletcher of Churches Together in England, and Dr Arshad Latif of the British Islamic Medical Association, to talk about these issues.

Shermara Fletcher: Thank you, Chair, and good morning everybody. It is very good to be with you all this morning and to hear of the great initiatives that are taking place. Over the next 10 minutes I will be speaking to you about the health inequalities, particularly in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, and its impact on the Church across the country over 3 key themes. Firstly, the roots of vaccine hesitancy due to the disproportionate mortality of Black and Asian minorities in England; secondly, the Churches' and the Black Majority Church response and role in leading initiatives to debunk myths whilst legitimising vaccine concerns; and, finally, the opportunities our communities have moving forward.

I'll be sharing with you from my perspective from hosting a series of vaccine webinars with over 15,000 people across the national landscape from hard to reach groups. According to the International Journal for Equity in Health the mortality rate for COVID-19 amongst people of Black African descent in English hospitals has been shown to be 3.5 times higher when compared to rates among White British nationals. [Slide 2] The Public Health England 'Disparities in the Risk and Outcomes of COVID-19' report revealed that COVID-19 was more likely to be diagnosed among Black ethnic groups compared to their White ethnic counterparts, with the highest mortality occurring amongst BAME persons living in more deprived areas. It also revealed that Black Caribbean and other Black ethnicities had between 10 and 50 per cent higher risk of death when compared to their White British National counterparts.

So how has this impacted our churches across the country? [Slide 3] Well there are over 50,000 congregations in England and the impact of COVID-19 has been felt amongst many congregants particularly those from BAME backgrounds who comprise of those frontline workers from the health, social care, public and private sectors, and congregants who are also living in deprived areas. Many congregations have experienced laments. They've seen the toil of pain, death, loss, economic hardship, the political turmoil in the backdrop of Brexit, as well as mental distress, which has impacted their congregants from all races, classes, and backgrounds. From a national, regional, and local church leadership perspective

across England they have been at the forefront of our communities – they have been tasked with pastoral care, and theologically bridging the gap between frontline workers as well as hearing the qualitative evidence based experience – and, consequently, are well positioned to inform the national landscape of local and regional concerns.

So why the hesitancy? [Slide 4] Some key trends have emerged from some of the webinars that our member churches from Churches Together in England have hosted. Firstly, that of mistrust. There seems to be a lot of mistrust, particularly in Black and Asian communities which has accumulated over a significant period of time, due to health inequalities and inequities in the health service. For instance, the high mortality in Black women for childbirth and disproportionality in mental health services. This mistrust has also been magnified by the disproportionate numbers of health workers, particularly from BAME communities, that have died. For instance, the first 11 doctors to die were from a BAME background. Another trend that we noticed is a historical mistrust of science and public health roll out programmes. For instance, being used as experimental guinea pigs, suspicion of eugenic agendas, such as the unethical Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis on Black males which saw 201 men given syphilis, as well as drug trials in Nigeria and India. There is also a feeling that the vaccine narrative and engagement by the government may be a bit disingenuous, as structural and racial inequalities faced by the community have not yet been tackled or addressed.

Secondly, there's apprehension around the speed of the vaccine development and questions such as whether it will work, and whether it contains nanotechnology or tracking chips. This is unhelpfully amplified by the unfiltered misinformation which is readily available on the internet from self professed doctors. For people at home, especially those living alone or who face isolation, it can be difficult to verify the information that they have heard,

especially if their channels of communication are supported from their own echo chambers.

Finally on this point, people are having theological objections or reservations as to whether the vaccine will compromise their religious ethics or values, particularly in areas such as eschatology and end of the world doctrines. Some believe it is the mark of the beast and the end of the world. These are just some of the things that are coming up in church communities across the country.

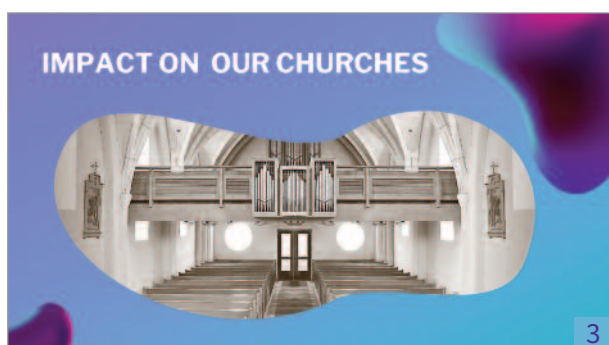
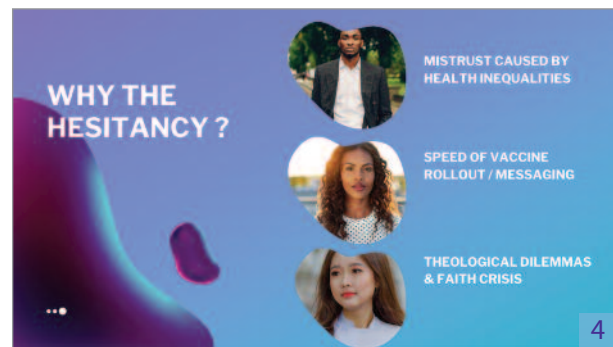
So how have some of the churches responded? [Slide 5] Many national and national Black majority churches have been leading the way in debunking myths whilst legitimising concerns in their community by strategically working with national, regional, and local public health authorities, often in their own time, sometimes without funding, and are strategically using their resources within their faith community. For instance, as has been mentioned today, there's the Give Hope campaign which is working to reshape a positive ecumenical narrative around the vaccine and they are using a very national, strategic coordinated approach. If you look at pictures 2 and 3 on the slide you'll see the largest, fastest-growing Pentecostal church, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, which is led by the Churches Together in England Pentecostal President. They've turned some of their buildings into COVID vaccination centres which have been visited by both Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles.

I know that time is short, to ensure we are able to hold the minute's silence at midday, so I shall move on to 'millennial Christian engagement' because I think this is going to be very important, particularly for the future leadership of the church and inter faith space. [Slide 6] They have been hosting many webinars. They've also been very concerned about the politicisation of the vaccine, and health and science messaging. And they are at the forefront

using artificial intelligence and technology to ensure that the message is rolled out across the country.

Finally, 'Opportunities and looking forward'. One of the main opportunities that presents itself is collaboration – churches, inter faith dialogues, speaking with government, to really harness the resources that are alive in the faith communities. Also there's opportunity for faith communities to understand and recognise their role, their responsibility, the unique micro and macro position of their institutions to have a voice in the public square and influence and impact their communities. Thank you.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much, Shermara.



A time of challenge

Dr Arshad Latif

Covid-19 Response Group, British Islamic Medical Association

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

Narendra Waghela: I welcome now Dr Arshad Latif.

Dr Arshad Latif: Thank you very much Narendra and the rest of the speakers for very enlightening talks. I'm a GP based in Nottingham and I shall be sharing some reflections from the British Islamic Medical Association's Covid-19 Response Group.

The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) is a national and democratic professional association of British Muslim medical professionals, with over 4,500 members. [Slide 2] We are entirely volunteer-led, both in funding and delivery. So everything that I'm talking about today wasn't funded by any other organisation, whether at a national or local level, it was all done by our volunteers and our associate members. Our mission is to unite and inspire members in the service of our communities and our profession. [Slide 3]

Some of the work that we already do – and some of you might already be aware of it – is shown on the slide. This was the position before COVID-19 hit. [Slide 4] So what was the COVID challenge? [Slide 5] Today we are marking a year since the first lockdown in the UK on 23 March 2020. We knew that it wasn't a matter of 'if' a lockdown happened, it was a matter of 'when'. This slide shows one of our colleagues in Italy reporting from Lombardy on 6 March where the situation was pretty horrific. It wasn't long before the UK saw similar numbers. Equally, it was very difficult because some world leaders were being sceptical about COVID 19 and not committing one way or the other.

From the Muslim community's perspective, we felt that some of the guidelines that were issued were not very inclusive. [Slide 6] For example, places of worship in England were permitted to reopen for individual worship from 15 June last year. That did not apply to Muslims because, although Muslims can pray anywhere anytime individually, a mosque is supposed to be a place of congregational worship.

As you will be aware, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds were disproportionately affected by COVID-19. [Slide 7] Muslims in the UK make up two thirds of the BAME community, so they were already disproportionately affected and, as more and more data came out, it became clear that Muslim men, in particular, were more affected.

So what did the community do? [Slide 8] This slide shows part of our Muslim national Covid response. This was a time for unity, a time to unite. BIMA took the lead as the medical COVID-19 Response Group. Even before the lockdown had been declared, we had brought together organisations working in different areas. As you can see, we did a lot of work on different fronts, [Slide 9] from engaging with mosques and responding to issues around safe burial and safe washing of the deceased to creating extensive Ramadan guidelines (because Ramadan came shortly after COVID-19 hit) and guidelines on visitation rights. We also did work relating to mental health.

This slide [Slide 10] is a picture of me delivering a talk 10 days before the national lockdown. So, as you can see, we were already preparing our mosques for the inevitable. This next slide [Slide 11] shows examples of some of our

guideline documents, which have continued to evolve as time has gone by. For example, the first document, shown on the left, highlights 3 principles: firstly, washing hands, because cleanliness is half of our faith; secondly, referencing Prophetic narration that “If you hear of a plague in a land, then do not go into it. If it happens in land where you are, then do not go out of it.”; and, thirdly, debunking myths and inviting people to ask questions of those with knowledge.

BIMA also engaged with the Muslim community to address mental health aspects of COVID-19 [Slide 12], working with organisations such as Sakoon, the Muslim Council of Britain and MWM UK. As the pandemic was continuing, we were already working towards flu vaccinations. [Slide 13] Some of the posters and videos that we produced around August were designed to help increase the uptake of the flu vaccination. That was, because there was evidence emerging that the chance of dying from COVID-19 was very high if you were from an Islamic background and had an additional infection.

As we approached November, there was messaging appearing, especially on WhatsApp, encouraging people to decline the vaccines, saying, for example, that they contained aluminium or foetal products. We then started producing slides with facts about the vaccines. [Slide 14] Subsequently, we produced our position papers on the vaccines to increase the confidence of the Muslim communities, giving the Islamic perspective as well as the medical side. [Slide 15] Some of you will have seen our myth-busting slides. They became a hit instantaneously and we have now translated them into 12 languages and they are being used across the world. [Slide 16]

This slide shows a snapshot of our website www.britishima.org where you can find all our work that we’ve done. [Slide 17] To date we have held about 95 community webinars. None of these were funded. They were all done by our volunteers in our spare time. We’re all working professionals. [Slide 18] We have had so many media engagements over this time as well,

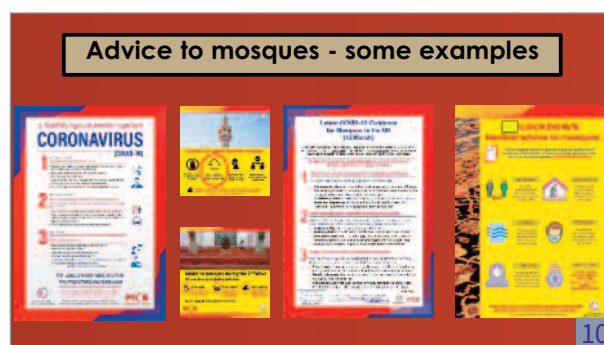
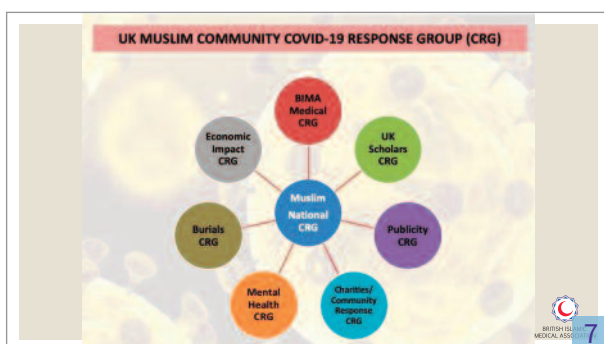
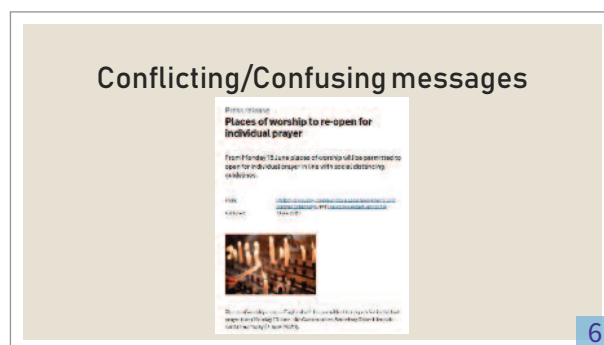
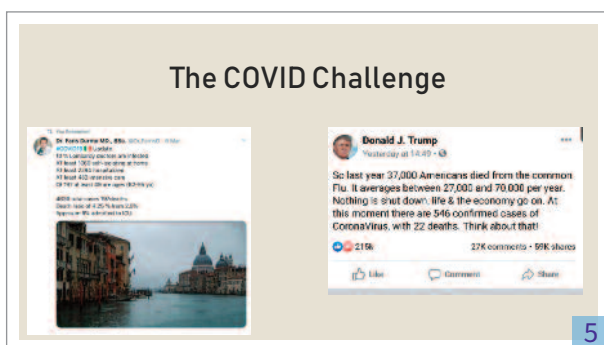
whether it’s radio or electronic media. The amazing thing about our work is that it has always been evidence-based. This slide [Slide 19] shows some findings from our recent survey done in Nottingham. The main concerns expressed related to the long-term safety profile of the vaccines.

To sum up, there are three key messages. [Slides 20 and 21] First impact. We need to be united to beat COVID-19 and protect each other because it has disproportionately impacted Muslim communities. Second, trust. We have to put our trust in the messengers, who we might not usually rely on. Third, control. People are given information and then make their own choice, the vaccine is not enforced, only recommended.

In summary, we used a number of tools. [Slide 22] We used the language of faith and we combined it with science – not making it a battle between faith and science but a combined effort. Also, we translated our work and made it available for free across the world to all communities.

This slide [Slide 23] shows a tower block on fire. If someone came with a bucket and tried to put out the fire I probably would be angry with that person because they had not called on other people and united in time of need. This is a time of unity and we all have to combine our efforts. We are only safe if we are all safe. That is the message that I want to leave you with. [Slide 24] Thank you so much.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much, Dr Latif.

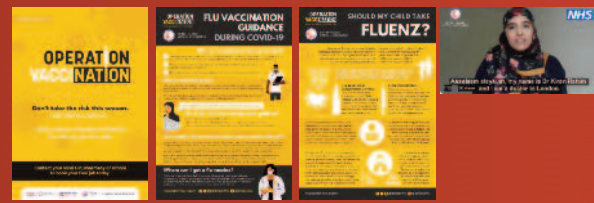


Mental Health CRG



11

Operation Vaccination (Flu)



12

Operation Vaccination (COVID-19)



13

Vaccine position papers



14

Answering the myths – 12 languages



15

BIMA Vaccine Hub



16

Community webinars



17

Media requests



18

Miscellaneous



19

Evidence based initiatives



20



KEY MESSAGES

△ Unite to defeat COVID and protect each other

3 KEY POINTS

- **IMPACT:**
 - COVID disproportionately impacts Muslim communities
- **TRUST:**
 - Trust the messengers (Muslim HCPs/ Islamic Scholars/ Muslim leaders)
- **CONTROL:**
 - You are in control to make choices based on correct info (we only recommend)

22

SUMMARY

- Used the language of faith and combined it with science - not making it a battle between them!
- Translated our work and conducted webinars which were grassroots focused.
- Made our material freely available to other faith groups here and abroad because we're only safe when we are all safe... including translating to Romanian, French, German.

23

Conclusion

24

وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

**"And whoever saves the life of one,
it is as if he has saved the whole of humankind"**

Surah Al-Maidah v32 Al Quran

Thank you

25

A minute's silence to remember all those who have died with COVID-19

At midday the meeting joined with those across the UK marking a minute's silence to remember all who have died with COVID-19; and to hold in gratitude the work of all those who have been responding to its impacts on our lives.

Ahead of the silence, the Most Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala read out, on behalf of the Co-Chairs and Faith Communities Forum Moderators, a short statement.

Statement from the Co-Chairs and Faith Communities Forum Moderators, read by the Most Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala

"At this meeting of Inter Faith Network member bodies today, we join with all those around the UK holding a minute's silence at the noon hour to remember the lives of those who have died with COVID-19.

Faith communities have experienced the loss and illness of many among their number. Some have experienced an especially heavy impact because their members are drawn in part or entirely from groups disproportionately affected by COVID-related illness and death.

We hold particularly in our prayers at this time the families, friends and colleagues of all who have died, their sorrow of loss deepened by isolation and, for many, inability to observe traditional rites of mourning. We hold also in our prayers those who continue to provide physical and spiritual support for the dying and the bereaved.

As well as remembering those who have died, we give thanks for all that has been done, by so many, to support those whose lives have been affected by the pandemic.

Let us, as we pause to remember, also commit to moving forward in hope and with commitment to working for a reopening of society that reflects the values of mutual concern, support and compassion demonstrated during this last year."

Feedback from morning workshops

Narendra Waghela: Welcome back to the plenary. I shall now be inviting each of the workshop Rapporteur to feed back two key points.

Workshop A: Places of worship, ritual life and celebrating festivals

Ashwin Soni (Crawley Interfaith Network): Our group noted that challenges have included not being able to gather at places of worship, not being able to visit those who were sick and not being able to handle bereavements in the usual way. This has caused a lot of anxiety and worry and many have experienced loneliness and mental health issues. But communities have adapted to respond to the challenges and used technology to assist. Religions have been able to 'repackage' their services and many people have prayed at home. Some have found that more people have taken part in services online than do so when the services are held in person. We also gave consideration to what might happen in the future. Will congregations come back to places of worship? Will all weddings and funerals be smaller in the future? There should be a memorial service at some point for everyone to grieve together and support each other.

Workshop B: Funerals and bereavement

Jay Anderson (Leeds Faiths Forum and IFN Trustee): Firstly, it is important to remember the role that religious and belief communities can play, and have played, in response to the pandemic. Secondly, there needs to be proactive pre planning of future

responses to pandemics and other emergencies, rather than a reactive response as we have had this time. Thirdly, looking to the future, it is important to remember that there will be a long term ongoing requirement for families and friends of those who have died to have grief and bereavement support and counselling.

Workshop C: Health care chaplaincy

Mohinder Singh Chana (Network of Sikh Organisations (UK) and IFN Trustee): As a result of the pandemic and the restriction on volunteers, chaplaincy has become less diverse. Also, with some volunteer chaplains leaving after this difficult period of time, it may well be that faith groups need to put new people forward to be trained as chaplains and in chaplaincy for the future.

Workshop D: Vaccination and BAME health COVID matters

Leonie Lewis (IFN Trustee): We noted the immense importance and value of local champions, because they know the situation and their faith communities, and they know how best to work with the local authority and the NHS. One of the challenges has been reaching people and making sure that the messaging is clear. It is important for information to be bespoke depending on the community, in terms of the language used and also the format. Finally, the engagement of the faith sector has to be ongoing, beyond COVID-19, and not be just tokenistic.

[Note: Due to technical problems the presentation that Mr Vinay Shah of the Institute of Jainology should have been able to give to this workshop was not given. This was through the One Jain Initiative of the Institute of Jainology and would have reflected the important work that the Jain community had been doing on the vaccination front. This is included in this report as part of the note for workshop D.]

Workshop E: Capturing the faith response to the pandemic – surveys, research, blogs

Carrie Gealy (IFN Intern): There are many national and local research projects that have been, and continue to be, undertaken on how COVID-19 has affected faith communities in the UK. One of the vital responses by faith communities during this time has been communicating Government guidelines within their communities. For the future, it will be important to trace the changes that COVID-19 is bringing out in faith communities. It is likely, for instance, that there will be a hybrid pattern of virtual and physical worship and resources in the future.

Religious Education and COVID-19 response

Paul Smalley

NASACRE, Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University and IFN Trustee

Narendra Waghela: We now move to our last presentation of the morning. I am very pleased to welcome Paul Smalley, Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University and a member of the committee of NASACRE. He is currently an IFN Trustee. He will be talking about how RE in schools has adapted to the online world of the pandemic, and also introducing a new secondary resource.

Paul Smalley: Thank you very much. It is an honour and a privilege to speak to you. The National Association of SACRES (NASACRE), the Welsh body WASACRE and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales are all longstanding members of IFN. There's a real commitment to good quality multi-faith RE from all these organisations, and to young people learning and developing skills which enable inter faith engagement.

I'll be speaking, firstly, about how RE in schools has adapted to the online world of the pandemic.¹ Today, 23 March, is the anniversary of the first lockdown. However, a few days before, on the evening of Friday 20 March 2020, there had already been an instruction to close all schools, except for vulnerable and key worker children. Very few pupils were in secondary schools. Primary provision did have more children of key workers and vulnerable children but there were still, in that first lockdown, relatively small numbers. It was a very

sudden move and I think most schools anticipated quite a short closure. There were problems with access for both staff and pupils in terms of hardware and software and internet availability. Another problem was the varying level of parental support for home learning. Schools began to provide a whole variety of resources, depending on a large number of factors. Some schools just provided task lists, saying, for example, 'Here is your RE learning to do over the next week'; some had learning packs that were delivered physically or picked up from the school; some provided recorded lessons delivered over the internet; and others provided live synchronous lessons.

Towards the end of that first period of lockdown there was a report by the National Foundation for Educational Research. It identified that 80% of schools had some subjects that were, in their words, 'gaining less attention'. RE was one of those subjects most commonly mentioned, along with, perhaps unsurprisingly, music, science, and PE, which often require specialist resources or specialist delivery. More surprisingly, English/literacy was also mentioned as often getting less attention.

In September there was then a return to school. There was a learning deficit identified and there was a catch up curriculum. Some subjects were again prioritised in that. The Department for Education stressed that RE must be part of that broad and balanced curriculum offer

¹ The references, and in particular the dates for the closing and opening of schools, refer mainly to the position in England.

but I'm not sure that all schools fully took on board that advice. The other advice was that desks should face the front, no one should be walking around the room, the windows should be open for ventilation, and pupils should be placed in 'bubbles'². Some bubbles, were small primary school classes, but others were whole year groups in sixth form colleges or high schools. What tended to happen was that as one person was identified as being in contact with the virus large numbers of pupils would be sent home and they then returned. That made curricular progression quite difficult.

In January, without much warning, schools were closed again. This time, however, there was a broader interpretation of 'key worker children'. The typical picture in a primary school was that the teacher would have about half their pupils, who were identified as key worker or vulnerable children, in the classroom and they would be delivering a lesson to them while simultaneously trying to stream it to the home learners. I think they did an amazing job. At secondary schools it was much simpler. They typically had perhaps 10% of pupils in school. These pupils were usually placed in an IT room and they accessed the same remote learning as the home learners. Some schools kept to the usual timetable. Some reduced the length of lessons. Some reduced the breadth of the curriculum. One high school I know of delivered core English and Maths lessons live but the RE department was simply asked to give a list of tasks for Key Stage 3 to complete. The pedagogical thinking was much more delivery of knowledge, much more of what I'm doing, which is simply talking to a screen, rather than that more engaging sort of RE that many pupils would be used to.

Currently pupils are back in classes. There is a wide variation in how that is being done and in how 'COVID safeness' is being

managed. If I had more time I would go into more detail. High school teachers are concerned about the confusion that remains over how they are due to arrive at grades for pupils in lieu of external examinations this summer. They are aware that there have been holes in curricular coverage but there has been minimal catch up curriculum for RE.



Secondly, I would like to introduce to you a new IFN resource for secondary school teachers. As I'm sure many of you are aware, IFN has a history of producing materials that help teachers of RE, such as *Connect: A Youth Inter Faith Action Guide*. In 2019 IFN produced an online teacher resource called *Learning about Inter Faith Activity: A Primary Resource For Pupils Aged 9-11*. That resource was very well received, and lots of schools have gone on to use it and develop it for their own curriculum. IFN has now produced a similar teacher resource for secondary schools. This is due to be published next week so today is a pre-launch! IFN's Assistant Director, Dr David Hampshire, has taken the lead on producing the resource, which has five units:

² 'Bubbles' in schools are distinct groups of pupils. They are designed to "reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group." https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/985138/10_May_Schools_Guidance.pdf

1. An introduction to inter faith activity in the UK
2. Inter faith dialogue
3. The ways that faith groups and inter faith groups show solidarity and service
4. The ways that faith and inter faith groups respond to crises, especially Covid-19
5. The ways that faith and inter faith groups are responding to climate change.

IFN's member bodies were invited to provide examples that could be used in the resource and a number of their projects are featured. IFN's Trustees and Faith Communities Forum members had the opportunity to see the material before it was finalised and contacts for the inter faith linking bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also had an opportunity to review the resource. There has also been an input from a pilot group of secondary schools in England and Wales. These included some schools from both diverse urban areas and rural areas, maintained schools and academies, non-denominational schools and C of E and Roman Catholic schools.

We are, of course, aware, that the curriculum for RE is different in the devolved nations. The resource has been framed within the English curriculum context but it included examples also from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and has benefitted also from input from WASACRE.

There is a real opportunity for local inter faith groups to engage with secondary schools through this resource and through their local SACREs to help implement this resource in schools across the country. One of the big potential ways of doing that is through Inter Faith Week which is mentioned in the resource. It would be great to see more connection between Inter Faith Week, inter faith groups, and local high schools. Thank you very much.

Narendra Waghela: Thank you very much Paul. We are grateful to you for your input to the secondary school resource project, as we are to other RE bodies; the national inter faith linking bodies of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; a number of schools; and to our members and others, examples of whose important work the resource features.

Partnership working during the pandemic – and beyond

Daniel Singleton,
Director, FaithAction

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

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Welcome to the afternoon session of today's meeting.

I am now going to hand over to Daniel Singleton who is going to talk about FaithAction's work in England to support actions by the UK Government on places of worship during the pandemic and faith communities during COVID-19; and the importance of faith groups and local authorities working in partnership. He will also be talking about the present and future possibilities of the 'Faith Covenant', developed by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society for which FaithAction provides the secretariat.

Daniel Singleton: Thank you. It is very good to join you all. I am currently part of the UK Government's taskforce on places of worship and faith and have just come from a meeting about vaccine and testing certification, which included discussion about how that will relate to faith communities. FaithAction is also engaged with the new Community Champions programme, looking particularly at messaging and capacity building. Many of you, like me, will have concerns about different parts of society and, to some extent all our work relates to the concerns we have. I am a parent of three secondary school aged children – that has been an interesting trial! I find that I continually bump into people that are concerned about our young people and what's happening with them.

The pandemic, and the lockdown restrictions in particular, have meant that we have become much more aware of issues about loneliness and social isolation. We often hear about the disproportionate effect that the disease and the pandemic have had on BAME communities. What is perhaps less well known is the unequal health outcomes that those communities usually have. The real scandal is that we knew the pandemic would have an effect on those communities, and we didn't do enough to mitigate those. So, I'll be speaking today on matters relating to these issues.

Let's look at some of the background information. [Slide 2] This slide shows some of the reports that I've drawn on today and that we have been reflecting on recently:

- The Free Churches Group report was a pre-pandemic report but it has been published during this period. It is about church and social cohesion, but it is not just from a Christian perspective and looks at faith in general.
- The All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society report looks at how faith and society are interacting particularly in relation to councils and the partnerships that have happened over this past year.
- The National Churches' Trust report explores the value of buildings and what has been enabled through the use of church buildings.

- Danny Kruger's report has a particular focus on faith and a new deal for faith, which has been interesting.

FaithAction has been running focus groups for the UK Government, particularly looking at the issues faced by places of worship during the pandemic. A number of you have taken part in these. [Slide 3] These issues and areas of focus have come up:

- Youth – I mentioned earlier that I have a personal interest in this.
- Vaccine – whether people are content to have the vaccine.
- Illness – how people feel about illness in communities, whether that be within faith communities, and whether that be Covid-related or not Covid-related.
- Finances – how we come out of Covid and the effect on finances, not only for institutions but also the effect on individuals within our faith communities.
- Social distancing – which remains an issue we have to navigate.
- Partnership – how those partnerships have expanded, how they have worked well and where there have been problems. This relates particularly to partnerships in a local setting. We have found that where there has been a partnership already in place in a local area, those partnerships have meant that there has been a moving ship, a momentum, for other things to flow around. Where local authorities, local government, have not already had a relationship with civil society, whether that be faith or other, then there has been more of a standing start. FaithAction has been particularly engaged in work around Essex where they have been going through the 'faith covenant' process. It has been fascinating to see, from the national perspective, what has happened there locally, how Essex County Council has engaged with faith organisations, and where it has seen the

role of faith. And FaithAction has flagged up where it can be used more generally.

One of the key questions to consider – and I think this was on the front cover of *The Spectator* a number of weeks ago – is what is the role of faith post the pandemic. [Slide 4] More and more people are starting to understand that faith is not a series of buildings, but rather a way of life. In that sense Covid itself was revealing, it unveiled. 'Apocalypse' means 'unveiling'. The pandemic has shown what is going on underneath, both within our faith communities but also within society as well. The statistics about health inequalities is just one example of an area that has been given more focus. Most of the faith groups FaithAction has engaged with and connected with have said that faith is more about relationships and connections than it is about meetings or buildings. Local authorities have realised that there is great value in what I would call 'faith capital', the connection with parts of their constituents. That is why this is of interest to the 'faith covenant' itself.

There have been particular issues around disengagement. Some people have said they have been more engaged and more connected online, without leaving their homes. Today's gathering is an example of this. But there has also been disengagement, with people becoming engaged and then disengaged. And that's part of the issue. Local authorities are asking us more and more how they can engage with young people. We are also being asked 'Can we?' and 'Should we?'. We can hold events online, but should we? We can connect in these ways, should we? So those are some of the questions.

There has, of course, been a great deal of volunteering in local communities. There was initially a great burst of this, though it looked from the NHS Volunteer Responders statistics that I saw that large tracts of the volunteers weren't utilised. That may have changed over the last period of time. There has been a lot of volunteering in faith communities and places of worship,

working with local authorities, which has been very powerful.

I noted earlier that a moving ship is easier to steer, and that more can be done when relationships are in place. [Slide 5] Certainly the majority of the 13 local authorities with which we are connected have told us that it has been beneficial to have a 'faith covenant', to have a relationship already. The mood music may have changed because of the practical response that people have seen, not just in terms of provision of food or visits but also the fact that people have needed faith at this time. The UK Government has taken a more nuanced approach to this latest lockdown than to the first lockdown. The question now is not so much 'Should we engage with faith?' but 'Why shouldn't we engage with faith?'. There are potential new partnerships coming with the army or with housing. It's also a time for a bit of a new flavour from faith as well.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to highlight our tips for gathering together as restrictions ease, whether it be in a place of worship or not: Density, Duration, Direction, Distance, and Ventilation. (If you want to make them all 'D's you can take out Ventilation and make it Draughts!) These are the key factors we are asking people always to consider when they come together. Thank you.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Daniel, thank you.

The Way out of the pandemic

Daniel Singleton – National Executive Director FaithAction
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FaithAction 1

Useful leads and links

Recent Reports

- Free Churches Group - The **Church and Social Cohesion**: Connecting Communities and Serving People
- Keeping the Faith Appg on Faith and Society report (councils and faith partnerships)
- House of Good – National Churches trust (£12.4bn value to UK)
- Levelling Up Our Communities – Danny Kruger MP review

- Focus Groups www.faithaction.net/campaigns/faith-covid-response/involved/
- Podcast – faithful leaders
- FaithAction e-news (Basic or Gold membership)
- Masterclass (e.g. meeting facilitation and zoom)

FaithAction 2

Areas of focus?

FaithAction 3

The Holy Relic Vs *Not so much a building more a way of life*

- Apocalyptic Covid?
- Building/ Meeting/ Relationship
- Disengagement
 - Youth
 - Online
- Can we? should we??

FaithAction 4

Build Back Better

Pressure = possibilities

- Moving ship Vs standing start
- Covenant –
 - Mood music has changed – because of practical response
 - No longer Why should we? Why shouldn't we?
 - New partnerships (Army, Housing etc)
- a New song

Tips for easing restrictions 4D1V

- Density
- Duration
- Direction
- Distance
- Ventilation

FaithAction 5

Partnership working during the pandemic – and beyond

Esmond Rosen

Chair, Barnet Multi Faith Forum

Bishop Jonathan Clark: I'm now going to hand over to Es Rosen, who is going to begin by showing us a video clip.

Mr Rosen showed a short video about COVID-19 vaccination, produced by Barnet Multi Faith Forum, Health Champions, Barnet Council, Public Health, and Barnet Together. It can be found at

<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/news/residents-barnet-have-important-message-you-please-get-covid-19-vaccine>.

Esmond Rosen: Good afternoon everybody. That video you have just seen illustrates so much better than words the partnership that we have achieved in Barnet as a result of the Covenant we signed in 2014. I believe this provides an excellent example of what we have accomplished, while picturing the range of faiths that we work alongside in this very diverse borough.

The Covenant has been the most meaningful positive development that the Barnet Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) has engaged in, providing us with a facility to sit at the strategic table with Barnet Council, its elected members and its officers, and to make our voice heard and listened to.

The pandemic has reinforced BMFF's representation not just as a form of support but also as a critical friend, working in partnership and dialogue with the Council, the voluntary sector, and business partners. This has inevitably brought us closer to the action of supporting foodbanks, helping the vulnerable and the

lonely, welcoming refugees with assistance and hospitality, and supporting those affected by mental illness, domestic abuse, bereavement and end of life care issues. I believe that our work as a faith forum has ensured that our faith values have been at the forefront of the response to the pandemic. It has been our faith, and the keeping of our faith, that has enabled us to remain strong and active in supporting our communities in the fervent hope that the world will be a better place when we have all survived these tribulations. But it is the Covenant and what it represents that I believe has enabled us to become the voice that embodies those values. Thank you very much.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you very much Es. We do now have an opportunity for a few moments of questions for Daniel and Es.

Mariano Marcigaglia (The Buddhist Society): I just wanted to refer back to a couple of points made in presentations this morning. Firstly, in relation to SACREs. I used to go into schools and hold workshops and so on, but it is very likely that these will now be online, so guidelines for virtual visits would be useful. Secondly, to reiterate that chaplaincy teams have become less diverse. In many cases minority faith leaders have only been able to act as chaplaincy volunteers and therefore not been allowed in to hospitals. I know of a number of minority faith patients who died without a religious representative, even though faith volunteers were asking to be let in or to

connect online. It is not good enough. It is not a matter of wanting to have a career in chaplaincy but, rather, that as minority faith leaders we need to be able to go into hospitals. So new structures or arrangements may be needed. It is certainly a lesson that we need to learn.

Rabbi Maurice Michaels (IFN Trustee/Bournemouth & Poole Faith Links): In his presentation Daniel talked about disengagement online. We need to remember that the elderly feature very highly in that. My synagogue has an elderly community and when the pandemic began a year ago I discovered that a quarter of my synagogue membership had no access to Wi-Fi. So I've had to find other ways of being able to communicate with them.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you. I'm sure that has been a common experience across many different faith groups.

Leon Charikar (Interfaith Forum for Leicestershire): Firstly, I wonder, Daniel, which partnerships you arrange with local authorities and whether you would be interested in finding out more about what has been happening in Leicester City and Leicestershire and Rutland. We have a wide forum and we meet regularly with faith groups, representatives from local authorities, health, and police. It has been a very productive forum across the last year. Secondly, I think that digital literacy is a really key issue. The Office for National Statistics did a report in 2019 which showed the increasing number of people becoming digitally literate but also noted that some people are being left behind. I would really like to see them do a follow up report, but they have no plans to do so at the moment. It would be good to see how things have changed over the last year. We have anecdotal reports of people learning via Zoom and being much more comfortable doing online meetings which is great. But, equally, some people, including the elderly or disabled or those without access to high speed broadband, might well be excluded.

David Griffith (Norwich InterFaith Link): I just wanted to warn against stereotyping

the elderly as not being able to access the digital world. Some of the elderly people in our village in Norfolk have learnt how to use Zoom across the last year. It's important not to stigmatise the elderly.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you. I Zoom regularly with my 98 year old mother so I should know that! Before we move to our next speaker, any brief responses from Daniel or from Es?

Daniel Singleton: Part of a project we are working on at the moment is related to digital exclusion. I am happy to connect further with anyone who is interested in digital exclusion – info@faithaction.net. In terms of how people get involved with the Covenant, we have seen this from both sides, with local authorities or faith collectives approaching one another. In Barnet BMFF approached the APPG for assistance but in other places the local authority has approached the local inter faith organisation. www.faithandsociety.org gives information about the work of the APPG. I am very happy to hear more about what is going on in Leicester or to speak with anyone who would like to talk about the Faith Covenant – assistant@faithaction.net.

Partnership working during the pandemic – and beyond

Kate McColgan

Chair, Inter Faith Council for Wales

Bishop Jonathan Clark: We now welcome Kate McColgan, Chair of the Inter Faith Council for Wales, who is going to be reflecting on the experience in Wales of the Council, and of the faith communities, and of the Welsh Government of working together to tackle the pandemic.

Kate McColgan: Thank you very much for inviting me to speak. We are in a really fortunate position here in Wales because we are a small country and the Inter Faith Council for Wales (IFCW) has a close relationship with the Welsh Assembly. After 9/11 the Assembly set up a Faith Communities Forum and some members of the IFCW sit on this. Meetings of the Forum used to take place about every three months. What I have found remarkable during COVID-19 is how much the Assembly clearly values the IFCW and the whole process has been much more useful since COVID-19. Since the start of COVID-19 we have had monthly meetings with the Minister and these have covered a lot of issues. The primary issues at the beginning were the closing of all our places of worship and then how we were going to reopen them, making sure there was proper consultation. A task group was set up, working very closely with the Minister, on setting the regulations in Wales. This had to deal with funerals and weddings and issues around the phased re-openings.

More recently there has been discussion about the vaccines. The Barnet vaccine video that we just saw was very impressive. Our Muslim community in Wales has invited all faith leaders to put a video together

encouraging people from different faiths to take the vaccine and that is nearly finished. The Welsh Government is pleased that it is being done. Our Evangelical group organised a very good workshop, open to everyone, to answer questions and concerns about the vaccines and, again, the Welsh Government has been pleased with that. I think that the close working relationship with the Government has been one of the reasons that various faith communities have been keen to open their places of worship as vaccine centres. This has also been a way for faith leaders to encourage their members to be vaccinated.

Elections for the Welsh Assembly are due to take place in May and the last Forum meeting before the election took place about a week ago. The Faith Minister, who is also the Deputy Minister, was quite emotional when she thanked the faith communities for their support. It was a two-way process. It was not just about faith communities assisting the Government. They have also consulted us on a number of matters. For example, at the last meeting there was discussion about whether people should be allowed to stand on the street as funeral cars went by and the Government took the views of faith communities on board.

I have certainly felt very privileged to be a part of the process. I know we're lucky here in Wales that the Government consults with us. I think that during the last 12 months it has not just been an obligation to consult, but that the Government has wanted to consult, which I have found really

heartening. I think the Government has recognised that faith communities have an awful lot to provide, for example in terms of volunteering and the emotional and spiritual support that has been so vital during this time. It feels as though we are real partners and I hope that that will continue going forward.

We are also lucky in Wales in that IFCW members are able to be part of discussions about particular Government portfolios. One of the discussions that I was involved in recently was about housing and homelessness. During the pandemic there have been very few homeless people sleeping rough because, somehow, beds have been found. So we were discussing how that could still be the case going forward. Again, it was a really useful discussion. Thank you.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you, Kate. That is very encouraging. Does anyone have any questions or comments?

Jim Robertson (North East Regional Faiths Network): I wonder whether faith groups could speak much more consistently with their members who actually work in public services, both the local authority and civil service. In my view, with the systemic concerns we have in society, people are having to make decisions every day in their work roles that often they know are against the common good. This leads to systemic inequalities which we have observed through the pandemic, particularly with social care work. How would the speakers view that in terms of, for example, the church speaking with their members?

Kate McColgan: There are many faith leaders who are part of the Inter Faith Council for Wales. I would hope that at our meetings they would represent the views from their membership, particularly those that are involved on the frontline. That is very important. It is a two-way process – seeking views from the ground but also those on the frontline feeding their views upwards.

Daniel Singleton: I think there will be a reckoning of some sort. A term that we heard bandied around recently is ‘moral injury’, particularly around end of life matters. I think we will look back and realise that some of the rules we had to obey were maybe not as necessary or as intelligent as they needed to be. But you have to make a decision with the information you have at the time and there is a need to be generous in terms of those who have to make those decisions. It was interesting to see that lockdown 1 was about protecting physical bodies but lockdown 3 has had more allowances for us in our humanity, for example through support groups and access to places of worship. I think we have to be generous with those who are in different positions but we do need to learn from mistakes, rather than just doing what we did last time. I think even the Government is doing that.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you. There is a serious question we are raising here which is about how different faith communities offer ethical guidance to members of those communities which actually goes across all walks of life and is about how to enable people to live out their faith ethically in the different places where they are. It might be very illuminating at some point for different faith communities to share some of the ways they differently do that. It's a very big topic. Thank you for raising it.

Feedback from afternoon workshops

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Welcome back everybody. I hope your conversations were good. We are now going to hear some brief feedback from the workshops.

Workshop A: Faith groups and leaders working with local authorities

Jim Robertson (North East Regional Faiths Network): From the contributors to the workshop we heard about how, at the start of the pandemic, there was some disjointedness, perhaps a response to the austerity context. There was also the danger of working in silos in a fragmented way and a number of structural concerns to think about. Looking forward, we were conscious of the need for faith groups to be much more aware of how their local authority and their local health authority work so that they can link to them and engage with them. Faith groups have a lot to offer – not only delivering parcels and helping others but also sharing knowledge and insights and experience and wisdom from living in our local communities. We were reassured by our contacts and friends from the public sector that a lot of effort was being made on their part also to engage with faith groups.

Workshop B: Wellbeing and safety, from loneliness to domestic abuse: responding on an inter faith basis

Marigold Bentley (Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations): We learned about the many creative ways of dealing with loneliness and preventing

domestic abuse. Both our presenters were very clear about the need for knowing who is doing what and doing lots of signposting and being aware of which are the specialist agencies available. Our particular learning point was around the very important role of faith communities in providing safe space in which to either deal with possible domestic abuse or to make new friends and prevent loneliness. The fact is that quite a lot of faith leaders do need training in these things to be models of good practice and also we do need to pay attention to safeguarding. There is a lot of good practice for us all on those issues.

Workshop C: Financial impacts on places of worship and faith-based charities

Steve Miller (London Boroughs Faiths Network): The presentation from NCVO covered a whole range of the issues. We focused on the disproportionate impact on communities that rely on regular weekly personal cash donations of one kind or another, and have drastically lost income either due to being closed or not being able to let out their premises. Those that have been able to emphasise the personal connection and switch to electronic systems have done slightly better. It is important to be aware of alternative funding opportunities that are open to everybody including faith groups. It is also important to take part in surveys when asked, in the same way as it is important to complete the Census. The more faith based groups respond to surveys the more our work becomes visible, including to funders and to those involved in leading on social policy.

Workshop D: Digital communication – from dialogue to social media and Inter Faith Week

Chelsea Craven (IFN volunteer): From the two organisations who presented in our group we learned about the importance of being regular, impactful and meaningful in our communication. One organisation made changes and choices internally and then produced ideas on how to be more impactful externally, including creating more meaningful digital content and engaging with others. The other organisation noticed that when they became more regular they were able to help their members learn more about being digital. The more that they were consistent the more people engaged. In terms of the future, we learned that not all groups have the same blessings as others and that's okay. There are lots of resources and ways to learn about how to be more digitally engaging and produce regular, quality content and at a national level we can help local faith and inter faith groups

people's emotions. The other key question was about taking sides. We also noted that it's important to bear in mind why a statement has to be issued, who wants it, and to remember that any statement may set a precedent because if you issue one then you may be under pressure to issue more. It can be difficult to issue statements 'by committee'; those involved need to feel comfortable with owning the statement. It has to be a collective decision whether to issue a statement or not otherwise there may be a breakdown in cohesion between the faith groups involved.

Workshop E: Inter faith solidarity and shared messaging in in challenging times

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra (Muslim Council of Britain): The presenter in our group highlighted four key points about statement making: statements should be factual; the heat of emotion should be left out of it; it is important to try to achieve parity between groups who may have opposing views; and the tone of the text should be concise without room left for any misunderstanding. He used an example of a British Islamic Medical Association statement. There were three key questions that came through. One was about how to deal with fake news. One was about a campaigner doing the exact opposite of what he was suggesting, playing on

Plenary Discussion

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you. We now have a few minutes for any further contributions or questions.

Chelsea Craven (IFN volunteer): The biggest take away that I've received from this whole event is this word 'expansion'. I love what we've shared and what we've discovered as communities. Expansion requires a little bit of uncomfortable adjusting, but it is beneficial in a lot of ways.

Yogesh Joshi (Watford Inter Faith Association): We should take advantage of digital communication and the tools available to all of us to access the community at large, and provide certain activities using these tools which are becoming part of our portfolio. In that way we can serve the greater good of the community at large.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: At some point it will be interesting to survey the experiences of those who have taken part in online worship through their faith communities. Many Christian churches have experienced people turning up, who were either previously very irregular attendees or indeed completely new. I think there have been some very interesting dynamics there.

Esmond Rosen (Barnet Multi Faith Forum): Our workshop included a presentation about resilience and it made me think about the resilience work that Barnet Multi Faith Forum has previously been engaged in at local community level relating to the flu pandemic, flooding and other major emergency incidents. I just wondered why, from a strategic level, the government did not bring these excellent experiences of resilience/emergency planning to a local level to respond to the pandemic. I hope that at some point these lessons can be learned about the value of working together, cross-government locally by bringing together all the contributions

from a faith and voluntary sector perspective.

Dr Harriet Crabtree (Inter Faith Network for the UK): Response has come down to a local level through the resilience forums. Perhaps in some areas it has worked better than in others. Different Government departments engage with different aspects of local authority activity, for example MHCLG in relation to local authorities in England, and, of course, the situation is different in the devolved nations. Sometimes good work is taking place but initiatives are not fully knit together. During the pandemic matters have moved at quite high speed. Daniel Singleton and others have helpfully been prompting more thought about what that kind of partnership working by faith groups and local authorities might look like, coming to know each other better and linking up, the kinds of activities that have been highlighted today. This is definitely something to look further at in the future.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: I agree. There were some local resilience fora that seemed to be more effective than others anyway at engaging faith communities. It was fairly patchy. I'm hoping that one of the consequences of this year is the realisation more widely among local governments that ongoing, continuous relationships with faith communities are really helpful especially in times of crisis.

Dr Harriet Crabtree (Inter Faith Network for the UK): There has been, in recent years, a downsizing of some local authority departments that deal with these issues and so there is not in all cases the same level of staffing to take forward the kind of partnership working at a local level that has been discussed. It is important to find out who the relevant personnel in your own local authority are.

Vinay Shah (Institute of Jainology): Our community has been providing sermons

and worship from our places of worship digitally, and over this time we have found that there are more and more people participating than would have usually done in person. We have been running classes and teaching people how to use digital devices and it's been very helpful. A total of 50,000 people have attended the three webinars we have held about COVID-19. We should encourage daily emails, distribution of laptops to schools, and so forth, within our communities and more widely in society as well.

COVID-19 and inter faith engagement moving forward

Ed Petersen

Chair, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum

Eda Molla Chousein

Youth Programme Coordinator of the National Interfaith Youth Network, Religions for Peace UK

Dr Avtar Singh Matharu

Chair, York Interfaith

Malcolm Deboo

Co-Moderator of IFN's Faith Communities Forum

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you. We now move on to our final section, 'COVID-19 and inter faith engagement moving forward'. We have four contributors who are going to offer us some reflections on how we move forward. Firstly, may I invite Ed Petersen to speak to us from a Northern Ireland perspective.

Ed Petersen: Thank you, Bishop Jonathan. I think there has been an incredible amount of good practice and learning that has come from today, particularly around resources for education and the input of the local to the national

We in Northern Ireland are so grateful for being included. The pandemic presented us with some early difficulties because of the challenges of sharing an island with the Republic of Ireland but trying to be centred in the UK as well. Thankfully we were able to work through that and there have been many positive stories. For example, even the British Army in many ways has been welcomed into Northern Ireland to provide support during this time. And there has been support from political parties that wouldn't be normally expected. It shows how there can be positives even in

something as difficult and troubling as the pandemic. That certainly has been a great help to us in Northern Ireland in recognising the importance of dialogue. We know obviously in inter faith work how important dialogue is but it has been important to stay connected to the devolved nations and also to the Republic of Ireland. Someone noted in the Chat that perhaps there could be contributions from other European countries at future IFN gatherings and that might be helpful.

In moving forward we have learned quite a lot from the difference between top-down and bottom-up. The bottom-up, the grassroots local inter faith initiatives, have made a really significant contribution to a lot of the arrangements that have taken place here and Stormont executives may not even have been aware of these. There is a lot of learning going on in higher government about how important engagement with various faith groups is on that level and that is something that we hope that we can take forward

It was really interesting in the workshop I attended to hear Ryan Charlton (Policy Lead for Community Resilience in the

Cabinet Office) speak about some of the challenges he and his colleagues are facing. But it also gives us something to work for and to recognise. We have a lot of challenges in Northern Ireland politically, and obviously at the moment with border situations, but this pandemic also has provided many positive opportunities in another way that we hope to continue to build on from an inter faith perspective. We just remain grateful that the devolved nations, the other nations in the UK, have never forgotten about us, and we give thanks for our partnership with yourselves and being part of this day. Thank you.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Ed, thank you very much for that contribution. It's great to hear from such different life experiences about commonalities and what we can

We now have Eda Molla Chousein, Youth Programme Coordinator of the National Inter Faith Youth Network of Religions for Peace UK, which is one of IFN's member bodies.

Eda Molla Chousein: Thank you. Good afternoon. I would like to thank you for this important event today. I am representing Religions for Peace UK National Interfaith Youth Network.

I am delighted to be here today, it was amazing and very encouraging to hear of all the work done by faith communities to keep people connected, safe, fed and in good mental health.

I consider wellbeing as really important, and inter faith organisations should continue having their focus on it together.

From an inter faith perspective, COVID-19 viruses like this do not discriminate between people of faith. That is why we all have to get together for our survival as it is a mutual concern.

Scientists have been warning us about the dangers of possible potential viruses over the last 30 years, but these warnings have never been taken into account as much as we've been doing since 2019. It is about

time that science and religion work together continuously and benefit people and the life on planet Earth.

We have been ignoring these things for some time, and COVID-19 has forced us to rely on science, as our routines have changed extremely during its time which has been really hard for everyone, for each age group, and it is still ongoing. We need to have a major initiative to thank all those who are working with vaccines at the moment and with having control of the viruses, not only COVID-19 but also COVID-19 mutations. They have been the ones who are now providing some kind of solution to deal with the COVID-19 virus. A lot of faith communities which you represent today are trying to raise awareness and open the eyes of individuals that there is fake news around. I think we should continue encouraging them to get done their vaccines. The people that are working on the vaccines at the moment, I'm taking about scientists, let's not forget many of them are people of faith too. For example, the two founders of Pfizer-BioNTech, the German-based company, are Muslim scientists. Just to raise the point and recognise that one of the key people behind the AstraZeneca vaccine was a woman. So every individual is very important and we shouldn't look at gender or the background of the individual but be united in this time, these hard times that we are all dealing with.

It is wonderful to see that several places of worships have now opened up and have become vaccination centres and they are providing vaccines. This is a very welcomed development.

As far as young people are concerned, I am coordinating the Religions for Peace UK Interfaith Youth Network. We have been researching and having interviews and conducting a survey among young people about their concerns and what they would like to do now, how we could support each other and where they would like to see themselves in the near future or in the future. And the outcomes of the research pointed out, and it is something that we are

all really very much aware of, that young people these days are not too concerned about divisions between faiths. They are not concerned too much about the intrareligious and interreligious rivalry. What they want in general is to have a voice, better wellbeing, equality, justice and a more sustainable world for now and the future. And the Religions for Peace UK Interfaith Youth Network is working on different ways of supporting them.

It is important that people of inter faith, the leaders of inter faith to come together to help for the future security in wellbeing, employment and survival. This is going to be the major concern for now and the future.

To bring my words to a conclusion the threat of COVID-19 will not end even with the control of this strain of virus. The possibilities of future viruses may come, and we all have to be prepared to work together and come up with concrete actions to challenge this in the UK. We need to come up with long term answers to deal with environmental issues because one of the clear reasons for the emergence of the virus is that there has been deforestation, extinctions and climate change. COVID-19 has helped to clarify the need to investigate biodiversity's role and we should really aim for sustainable development, educate ourselves and together work for concrete actions to help to solve local, national and worldwide challenges.

Thank you for your precious time! Thank you very much once again for organising this important event. It was very informative for me.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you, Eda, and thank you for pointing us to that wider framework in which we all live, which we have tended to put to one side over this last year, particularly the climate crisis which has to be a major focus for all of us.

We shall now hear from Dr Avtar Singh Matharu, Chair of York Interfaith.

Dr Avtar Singh Matharu: Thank you to you, Harriet and all the team at IFN for the invitation to speak. I've been asked to talk today about using Zoom and the road ahead and to offer some of the reflections from York Interfaith group. York Interfaith is a relatively small organisation but we do talk with all the major faith groups in York. Across the last year many of us have become well-versed in using Zoom. I'll be talking about some of its pros and cons that we've found as a group. And then finish with how we'll move ahead as an organisation.

To begin with, the positive aspects of Zoom and similar technologies:

- They bring people together, albeit virtually. It's an enabling technology. You see people, you hear voices, and you observe backgrounds. Ultimately we just have a conversation, and that can bring positive mental and wellbeing benefits. It's really interesting that as I'm sat here, even though I'm talking to a screen, I feel a strong relationship which I otherwise sometimes don't have in a large room. I'm only about 50cm away from the screen and it's almost as if everyone is with me rather than when I'm 5m away in a large seminar room. That's an interesting fact that I've observed.
- You don't have to be on video. You can attend in your pyjamas if you want to!
- You don't have to travel. This has in the past been a restriction for York Interfaith Group because our meetings are held once a month in the evening and there have been issues with travelling in the winter, especially for families.
- We are all in a comfortable venue. We're all in the privacy of our own four walls.
- There are no geographical restrictions. We've had visitors and guests joining us from Spain regularly for our meetings. We regularly get about 40 attendees in our meeting now which is quite good.

- There are lots of whizzes and bangs with interactive technology! Sometimes it's a challenge just for most of us to connect, so we tend to use it as a chat medium rather than for breakouts or electronic boards.
- A huge success of Zoom for us has been Inter Faith Week. We had record numbers attending our events during the Week because of Zoom and all the benefits I've just mentioned. Dee Boyle, the group's Vice Chair, had a counter and noted that over 350 attendees took part during the Week. For a community as small as York that's impressive.

And now, some of the limitations, which I'm sure we've all encountered:

- Security is a big issue. We post our Zoom invites only to our members with a strict message not to share with any third party. If anyone wants to join they have to email York Interfaith Group to get the link. That has worked well. We also keep attendees in a holding room. Only when people can recognise a name are they allowed in. Obviously the person in charge has got control of the meeting so it's really important that they know how to use Zoom. If there are any rogue entries that person can then quickly react.
- Technophobia can also be a problem.
- Poor internet connection is an issue.
- Accessibility is also an issue. We held a seminar on faith and disability, and within that we asked the question, "How does Zoom work"? We are not making full use of subtitles or closed captions which we should do more.

A lot of has already been said about the importance of communicating and that must continue. The road ahead for York Interfaith Group is a blended model. A blended model of life, virtual, but also virtual live. Virtual live is a model we're exploring with the City of York Council where we hope to have a live event with

speakers and an audience that is then also livestreamed for anyone who wants to watch. Thank you.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you very much. That was a wonderful rundown of the opportunities and also some of the difficulties that we are all experiencing with this new virtual life we lead. I think for all of us it will continue to be part of everyday life in some way or another.

Finally, it is my pleasure and privilege to invite Malcolm Deboo to speak to us, my fellow Co-Moderator of IFN's Faith Communities Forum.

Malcolm Deboo: Thank you, Bishop Jonathan. First of all I would like to convey my warmest greetings to all our inter faith brothers and sisters who are here for this National Meeting today. I think each of us in our own way, in our respective organisations, is doing a wonderful job during these very turbulent times we are facing.

Earlier this afternoon we held a minute's silence and reflected on what has happened. Each year, around 20-21 March, the Zoroastrian community celebrates Nowruz from a religious perspective, together with millions of others who celebrate Nowruz. Last year we (at the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe knew that COVID-19 had already come to our UK shores, so we decided to lock down the Zoroastrian Centre a week early on 16 March and we marked Nowruz under lockdown.

I was reflecting that on the morning of 22 March I got my very first phone call informing me that a member of our community had sadly passed away in the early hours due to COVID-19. The tragedy was that this person had just celebrated his diamond *jubilee* a few months earlier, had returned to the UK in late February, gone to the hospital outpatients department because of some pain possibly related to deep vein thrombosis, then sadly contracted COVID-19 and passed away. My immediate response was "What do I do?"

Can we use the Zoroastrian Centre to perform the after death ceremonies?” My immediate answer was “Yes”. Then we had to consider whether the next of kin could attend. That was difficult because I had to balance a duty of care for our priest performing the prayers with the needs of the family. We quickly agreed that the immediate next of kin could attend so long as social distancing was maintained. That is how we started from last year onwards.

Like everybody we have had our fair share of people who have passed away. Some due to COVID-19, others due to old age, pre-existing conditions, and so forth. One can never anticipate when death will come. But we at the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, of which I am the current President, have been taking a long view. ZTFE has been around for 160 years in this country, so it has seen the First World War, the flu pandemic and the Second World War, and we know that COVID-19 is not going to go away soon. But at the same time we are optimistic. This is a message I shared with members of my community a few days ago for Nowruz. From the Zoroastrian perspective our New Year festival is not called just Nowruz but Jamsheedi Nowruz after King Jamsheed, who is a character in Zoroastrianism similar to Noah of Noah’s ark. In ancient times Jamsheed, being assisted by God, built an underground shelter to protect God’s creation from the bitter winter. Of course the winter lasted for several decades, (many perished) and people had to be resilient but the fact is that the winter subsided. The forces of evil did not destroy (God’s) creation. There was a new beginning, hence Nowruz – the new beginning. And this is what I share with my co-religionists and others that look sadly on what is happening today for whatever reason.

We are very much aware of the increase of the human population, and thereby there is encroachment into areas which were inhabited traditionally by wildlife. There is very much a connection to COVID-19 where the virus was linked initially to wildlife, crossing over into humans.

One of our earlier speakers reflected that if we are not careful and do not learn the lessons, this will happen again. But the point is that humans are in many ways like other creations. They are very resilient. We are very innovative. This is why I think that all of us from many different faith communities are talking through the virtual method of Zoom, which we had not even thought about a year ago. So this is positive. This is optimistic. The fact is that COVID-19 will subside. Of course, down the line something else could occur. Again we will have to be resilient, to protect ourselves, and we’ll overcome that as well. That is how life will go on. This is how life has always gone on for thousands of years. We have gone through the bubonic plague, we have gone through the various pandemics. Fortunately, I would say that so far in my lifetime we have not experienced this sort of pandemic until just now. As late as our grandparents’ generation they used to experience it quite periodically.

I remember during my early years growing up in India how every year in my boarding school we used to have cholera vaccinations and typhoid vaccinations. As a child I had a TB vaccination. We are encouraging everyone to have the COVID vaccinations. From my point of view, it is important, it is responsible, and it is beneficial to all of us to safeguard ourselves. From a Zoroastrian faith point of view the way we see it is to overcome the evil that has been thrust upon us.

To conclude, I know that this year we are not meeting face to face, we cannot shake hands, we cannot hug, we cannot talk like that, but we have got other ways of doing things. However I can assure you that all of us from a faith point of view take a long term perspective. We have been around for millennia, some of us longer, as practising faith communities and we know that we will meet again in person. We know that we will be able to chat, shake hands, hug, and exchange stories (face to face). We are already doing it on Zoom and other virtual mediums. The important thing is that we continue to assist and help everybody

because all of us are in it together. None of us are exclusive.

I'm going to have my vaccination this Saturday. The question I asked when booking appointment was "Is it going to be the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine?" I was told, "Yes". I said, "Great" – to the amazement of the receptionist since AstraZeneca vaccine has received negative publicity. Because we, in the Zoroastrian community have a vested interest in its success since one of the largest producers of the AstraZeneca vaccine globally at a fraction of cost compared to other COVID vaccines is the Serum Institute in India the largest producer of vaccines in the world by volume, it is owned by a Zoroastrian who is a member of the ZTFE! Everybody should be inoculated because it is beneficial for the world over. The sooner we do it, the sooner we will come out of this difficulty and we will meet again. Thank you.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Malcolm thank you very much. I know that personally you have had to demonstrate quite a lot of resilience this year because you have had to deal with quite a lot of the deaths that there have been in your community. So thank you for giving this gift of your reflections to us as we come towards the end of our day.

Closing reflections from the Co-Chairs

The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark and Narendra Waghela Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you to everybody for contributing to today, whether through speaking, attending or organising. I shall now hand over to Narendra to close the day for us.

you very, very much. We wish you all the very best for your continued work.

Bishop Jonathan Clark: Thank you everybody. Stay safe and keep well.

Narendra Waghela: It has been a very interesting and informative day. Thank you all for taking part.

As one of our speakers said earlier, “In serving humanity we find God”. It is very positive that faith communities are being heard and that because of COVID-19, there has been greater recognition of the contribution of faith communities, particularly by government.

Our day is now coming to an end. I hope you have found it interesting and worthwhile. These are difficult times and it is good to share together and learn so that we can move forward well.

May I remind you that this evening, linked to the Day of Reflection, there will be a doorstep vigil at 8pm where people are invited to use candles, torches, or light up their mobile phones. You may like to join in with others across the UK.

Lastly, but very much not least, thank you to all our excellent plenary speakers and all the discussion group facilitators, presenters, and rapporteurs; to our fellow officers and other Trustees; to everyone attending and participating and sharing their thoughts with us; and to the IFN staff who have worked in the background to make the arrangements for today. Thank

Workshop 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 workshops as a whole.

Morning Workshop A: Places of worship, ritual life and celebrating festivals

Facilitator: Patricia Stoa, Nottingham
Inter Faith Council and IFN Trustees

Presenters: Mr Rajnish Kashyap, General Secretary, Hindu Council UK and member of the UK Government's Places of Worship Task Force (England); and Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg, Senior Rabbi of Woodford Forest United Synagogue in London, under the Chief Rabbi's auspices, and IFN FCF Vice-Moderator

Rapporteur: Mr Ashwin Soni, Crawley
Interfaith Network

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Ms Patricia Stoa welcomed participants to the discussion group.

Mr Rajnish Kashyap offered his presentation. A summary of his points is below:

- In March last year, we recognised that the unprecedented circumstances surrounding the coronavirus were impacting the whole world including us in the UK. It changed the UK landscape so profoundly and so quickly. Guidance and instructions from the UK Government to shut places of worship and for those over 70 to self-isolate created a dilemma for Hindu places of worships between individual safety and community.
- In the UK there are over 500 Hindu organisations, including at least 200 mandirs and hundreds of spiritual,

religious and educational establishments. In response to COVID-19, the closure of mandirs and local community organisations resulted in a number of challenges for access to, and the provision of, faith-based services and activities for the Hindu community. In many cases, these institutions are focal points of the community that provide comfort for elderly members and much-needed space for companionship, as well as support for families and education for children.

- From the Government point of view, places of worship serve an important role in supporting and providing spiritual leadership for this country's diverse communities and in bringing communities and generations together, but this also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the spread of the virus.

- During this pandemic, significant spiritual moments such as Easter, Passover, Ramadan and Vaisakhi, when families, friends and congregations traditionally gather together, have been celebrated at home. Hindu festivals like Janmaashtami, Navaratri and Diwali were also disrupted by the pandemic, with family celebrations impacted by social distancing restrictions.
- The Government realised that practical issues relating to physical buildings and devotees, such as size of space, are significant. However, it was determined to find a way to safely reopen places of worship as soon as possible, ensuring that people were not put at undue risk. Therefore, a Taskforce was established to provide advice and jointly produce guidance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) to support places of worship across England to reopen safely. The Government continues to work with its Places of Worship Taskforce and faith leaders to review and amend this guidance, as necessary, in line with the changing situation and to enable the safe opening of places of worship for as broad a range of activities as possible when it is safe to do so.

- As places of worship prepared to reopen after more than three months of the first lockdown, we noticed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on faith communities in the UK. For many people, the pandemic has led to a fundamental recalibration of the way we live and what is really important.
- As COVID-19 tore through the world, according to one survey of Google searches, searches for “prayer” rose by 50%. All of a sudden people wanted to know how to pray.
- There was a time not that long ago when we thought that prayer and religion only take place in temples, churches and mosques. Then the Church of England launched a 24-hour free phone line for Christian worship and prayer, aimed at people with no or limited access to the internet and offering “words of comfort and hope”. Other faiths and denominations saw similar trends. Hindus Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and others rapidly developed or expanded online prayers and services. Remarkably, the transfer of faith to the easily accessible and informal virtual world unleashed new experimentation.
- We saw many mandirs enabling families to carry out at home the funeral rituals which were traditionally done by a pandit ji, with a large crowd attending.
- All of a sudden now we see concessions, we see adaptations, we see innovations. If one was to have suggested this a year ago there would have been protests, “Oh no, this is how we’ve always done it” “This is the traditional way.” But people

have changed the way they practise. Across different faiths, religious leaders are exploring the implications of having to change some long-held beliefs and practices and they have realised that our future is going to be very different for a very long time. Now some faith leaders are asking themselves whether the changes in the way they have practised their faith under lockdown will leave a lasting mark.

- This poignant period at home during the pandemic, when celebrating festivals alone, has made me reflect on the true value of community gatherings, festivals and celebrations. The message of Diwali remains the victory of good over evil. Compassion, selfless service and empathy enable us and prepare us to fight the battles of ‘Dharma’ (righteousness). In life, we are faced with challenges and forced to make choices. These, when guided by a sense of duty, go a long way in changing lives for the better.

Ms Stoat thanked Mr Kashyap, who had arranged his diary on a very busy day to give this short presentation. He would be leaving shortly for another meeting.

Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg then offered his presentation. A summary of his points is below:

Places of worship

- I have been a Rabbi for nearly 20 years, mainly in very diverse communities.
- Rabbis used to deal with births, marriages and deaths. Now they also have to be social workers, PR experts, computer experts and strategic planning. Strategic plans have never included “let’s close down all our places of worship”!
- Synagogues have for a long time been community centres. The phrase in Hebrew is ‘Bet Hakenesset which means ‘a place of gathering’. Worship is important but the majority of the Jewish community come for social and cultural experiences.

- Judaism is individual, it is in the home, not just in the synagogue. We have had to totally recalibrate our expectations and our understanding of religion.
- Judaism puts human life above all else. The Chief Rabbi was very clear from the beginning that we should all do whatever we have to do to save lives. The 'mainstream' community is generally very law-abiding.
- Synagogues had to be closed out of love not out of hate.
- The United Synagogue and the Chief Rabbi for which I work, along with many other central organisations, have become COVID-19 experts and come up with detailed guidance in consultation every step of the way.
- Praying at home is fine but it is not the same – especially when it comes to Shabbat and festivals where so much centres on the synagogue and community. But it has reminded people of the importance of self-responsibility in Judaism, and individual relationship with God.
- In my own community we sent out packs for every religious holiday with guides. Going online has presented some challenges, especially for the Orthodox community, but there has been more engagement in some respects, for example at morning services.
- When we were able to open again we had to tell people over 70, children and all those who were vulnerable not to attend. Many of those are the ones who most need the community.
- In some respects it was difficult that some of the timings on rule changes related to Christmas and Easter, as that did not necessarily take into account other faith festivals, such as Passover.
- Some shuls have responded magnificently; others have been left behind.

- The impression has been of a lot of fear and anxiety in society, fuelled, for instance, by stories of police being called to legal gatherings at synagogues.

Social, cultural and community

- The majority of the Jewish community do not regularly attend services. The bigger issues for many have been the social and cultural challenges, the anxiety of many in our communities, particularly older members, and the disruption to family life and social life, ie all the things that we normally take for granted:
 - Charitable activities
 - Volunteering
 - Youth and children's activities and school/Sunday school
- There have been financial challenges for Jewish individuals, organisations, schools and charities. Many self-employed people are struggling. The furlough scheme has been able to help some people but not everybody. Charities have not been able to do their usual fundraising. Schools have had lowered voluntary contributions.
- Security issues have not been only physical but also online, in terms of safeguarding. There was one example of a memorial gathering that was being held on Zoom that was 'bombed' by a far-right extremist.
- The pandemic has changed the nature of social gatherings, lunch clubs, cultural and arts events, meals on wheels, and so forth.
- It has also changed the nature of life cycle events and celebrations in the synagogue. Bar Mitzvahs have taken place without extended family and without food to celebrate. There has been a silver lining of some people being able to attend by Zoom who might not have been able to do so in hospital.

- There have also been difficulties with visiting people in hospital and chaplaincy challenges.
- Bereavement has been a huge upheaval – losing someone to COVID-19, not being able to visit them in hospital for end of life care and rituals, changes to burial procedures and ‘shiva’ (the mourning period).
- Families with children have often been so fatigued from homeschooling, they have not had the energy to engage with online events.
- The reality of having to adapt is the story of the Jewish journey but it is still incredibly challenging. Many sacred traditions and customs have fallen by the wayside, for example the ‘kaddish’.
- Pastorally, as a clergyman, I have had to broaden my remit to think a lot more about those who are not automatically in the synagogue. I have had to rethink my mindset to be more inclusive and outreach-focused and find novel ways to interact and support people. All whilst having 9 children at home being home-schooled!
- Many have experienced mental health challenges particularly around grief, loneliness and anxiety. I have not had a guest inside my house for over a year, which is unheard of. My youngest child is afraid of people in real life but is very happy to wave online!
- I have been blessed to have a supportive and understanding community and lay leaders. I had COVID-19 myself a year ago and thankfully came through it. I had huge support from the community but not all colleagues do and many of those in faith communities, whether paid or voluntary, are finding it very traumatic.
- For me it is a privilege to be able to visit people in hospital for end of life. I have been vaccinated and I feel safe.
- Theologically, Judaism is focussed on practical actions. There has been a positive rethinking with people becoming more Jewish at home because they cannot just rely on organisations.
- One synagogue rebadged itself as the “Shul without walls”. The community is no longer as focused on buildings and gathering, but has become much more holistic and universal. People have got to know their neighbours better and are volunteering more. Celebrations have become a lot simpler and people are appreciating what they used to take for granted. There has been increased engagement across the spectrum and people embracing the use of online technology.

Looking to the future

- One of the challenges will be not to fall back into the same old ways and patterns, but rather to take advantage of the positives – the community spirit, volunteering and support for one another.
- It will be important to find the balance between the online world and the in-person world involving those who cannot leave home and not leaving them behind
- We should value all that we have found that matters – going back to basics, practising our faith at home, spending more time with our families.
- Some people have been overwhelmed by the pandemic and disengaged from community life. It will be important to try and bring them back in.
- Some people have not had an opportunity to grieve for loved ones or to come to terms with life changing events. They will all need support and care.

Ms Stoat thanked Rabbi Wollenberg and invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points were made.

Where a response was made by Rabbi Wollenberg this is in italics.

- One of the big difficulties has been the inability to visit friends or family in hospital or to comfort the dying or bereaved in the usual way. This was a problem especially during the first lockdown.
Some hospitals have been allowing chaplains and volunteers to visit, others have not. It has been dependent on the situation in each local area. There are not always chaplains of every faith available. Some faith community leaders themselves are elderly and vulnerable and so not able to visit hospitals. It is always worth contacting the general chaplains in the first instance, whatever your faith background, as they will help as best they can.
- It is important to cherish all that is good that has been learned from the pandemic, but also to restore some of what has been lost from faith traditions.
- Online services and community gatherings have enabled people to take part who would not have been able to do so, for example frail people or those who care for others. Hopefully this will continue.
It will be very important for places of worship to continue livestreaming their services for those who cannot attend in-person.
- In some communities there have been many more people taking part online than would have been in-person. It will be important to engage with those who are happy to take part online but have concerns about going into a place of worship.
Levels of Jewish literacy are quite low in some parts of the Jewish community and many are afraid of attending a traditional Jewish service because they don't understand the rituals. Being online has made people feel more comfortable. Some people think that worshippers have become comfortable at home and won't return to places of worship; others think

that worshippers have missed it greatly and will return as soon as they can.

- Many places of worship have been very innovative. It doesn't always need to involve technology. One local gurdwara has been using an ice cream scoop to serve the Karah Prasad!
- A lot of people are hurting and in pain. How can we help people to heal?
It will be good to hold a memorial service to remember all who have died, though that will also need to be held in a way that is inclusive to all who cannot attend.
- Online meetings are very useful for administration, not just for worship. *They are very convenient and there is no need to worry about travel. It can, however, mean that people think you are available all the time!*
- The experience of the Muslim community has been very similar to the experiences described in the presentations. The biggest challenges have been theology and jurisprudence. Where common sense might expect people to behave in a certain way, the jurisprudence might say that was not possible because of the requirements in the scriptures. For example, the imam cannot be in the mosque to stream the daily prayers online for people and families to follow him in their homes; you have to be in a physical space with the imam to follow him. So, it was suggested that the adults in the family could lead the family for each household. This has led to some complacency because it is so convenient to wait to pray until you have finished dinner, cleared up and so forth. Getting back to the normal regime for prayer will be a challenge. Muslims are encouraged to go to a mosque and to pray with a congregation rather than praying alone. However, circumstances have to dictate the way people behave. Ramadan this year will be slightly better than last year because mosques are open. Managing large numbers in the congregations will be a challenge.

Morning Workshop B: Funerals and bereavement

Facilitator: Ms Jo Backus, Network of Buddhist Organisations and IFN Trustee

Presenters: Mr Mohamed Omer MBE, Gardens of Peace/Muslim Council of Britain and the Revd Canon Dr John Hall, Devon Faith and Belief Forum

Rapporteur: Ms Jay Anderson, Leeds Faiths Forum and IFN Trustee

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Ms Jo Backus welcomed participants and invited them to introduce themselves.

Mr Omer offered his presentation. A summary of his points is below:

- BAME communities have been the most adversely affected by the pandemic and this has put great pressure on services that meet the needs of those communities.
- Gardens of Peace caters for 40% to 45% of Muslim funerals in the Greater London area.
- Morbidity management is the key issue, both in terms of process and backlog.
- In the early stages of the pandemic there were issues about touching bodies, as touch was thought to be the key vector of transmission. The deceased were presented in body-bags for burial from hospitals. This meant that they could not be washed. This was a serious issue for both undertakers and families.
- There was a need to work with hospitals and mortuaries to ensure a quick turnaround, given the need to bury the deceased as soon as possible. The ideal is burial within 24 hours. Even though there were 20 burials a day at the cemetery the

time before burial was never more than 5 days.

- There was also the issue of families being excluded from the end of life process. It is expected that there will be unresolved issues that people who could not mourn will face in the future and there will be need for on-going pastoral support.
- The size of funerals was curtailed and this is significant in communities where large funerals are common place. People do not feel they have shown the respect due to the individual.
- The second wave caused different problems in that it occurred in the winter and the state of the cemetery had to be considered. The important thing was to ensure that funerals were both timely and dignified.
- Stakeholders worked well together but there were challenges and some of these will be ongoing for the future.

Ms Backus thanked Mr Omer and invited questions. Responses from Mr Omer are in italics.

- Have there been any issues with the repatriation of the dead where families wanted it?
This is not usually an issue for Muslims as Islamic teaching is that a person should be buried where they die. Repatriation was impossible in the first lockdown but available during the second lockdown. Gardens of Peace has not been involved in any repatriations.
- What are the Islamic beliefs in terms of a time scale for the dead person?
Quick burial is important as when the person is buried they are visited by two angels. The angels question the person who then awaits the final Day of Judgement. Delay in burial means the soul cannot be released to rest before that occurs.

The Revd Canon Dr John Hall offered his presentation, noting that it was from the

perspective of work done by the Devon Faith and Belief Forum with Devon County Council. He shared the following webpage from Devon County Council <https://www.devon.gov.uk/equality/communities/religion-faith-or-belief/coronavirus-pandemic>. A copy of his PowerPoint slides is at the end of his note and a summary of his points is below.

- Devon County Council set up an Equality Reference Group (ERF) to ensure that it was meeting the needs of its diverse population. This was in place before the pandemic.
- Part of the ERF is focused on faith and belief.
- Given the rural nature of much of Devon there was no one single point of reference for those wanting to know about what they should do when being confronted by issues of faith and belief during the pandemic.
- There were clear areas where there was a need for improvement of religious literacy, especially amongst the officers of the Council.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic a page was set up called 'Blessings, rituals and last rites during the coronavirus pandemic'.
- The guide was designed for care / nursing homes and other establishments which may be in care of a person who is dying or of the body of a person who has recently died.
- It takes into account the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic and the concerns raised by it and it offers guidance on how to provide people with a caring, respectful and sensitive experience as they approach the end of their life.
- The web page identifies 11 communities and has a special section relating to each on washing and preparation of the bodies of those who have died.
- £4,000 has been given to progress this work.
- It would be good to know whether there are similar initiatives in other parts of the UK.
- **Ms Backus** thanked Dr Hall and invited questions and a general discussion. Responses from Dr Hall are in italics.
- In Leicester, the City Mayor brought people together in a Faith Engagement Group, a reference group for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. This mobilised 4,000 volunteers, provided with PPE, to respond to the needs of the dead and their families. They provided appropriate storage facilities and worked with cemeteries and crematoria to ensure funerals were at a fixed cost. Members of Leicester Council of Faiths participated in this.
- The Muslim Council of Britain developed guidance and set up a sub-group. The Government recognised the importance of faith in the pandemic and there was a meeting held with the Cabinet Office on a weekly basis. What was noticeable was the number of volunteers that had responded to the needs in their communities.
- Jewish communities have faced issues similar to those faced by the Muslim community. The Jewish Joint Burial Society (non-Orthodox traditions) made the decision that saving life was more important than any other consideration. Initially all funerals were banned and the burial was conducted by cemetery staff with no one else present, with the service being held on Zoom. The person who conducted the funeral may be at the cemetery or officiating from their own home. JJBS staff would conduct the funeral in the appropriate manner but there were issues around washing the body and filling the grave and this made things very difficult for families and communities. Support for families would need to be on going. This was true for Orthodox communities, where there

He had attended a Jewish funeral via Zoom and there was a large legacy of loss and grief.

- Devon resources could be used to put pressure on others to do similar things, especially highlighting very small communities that are often overlooked.*



Morning Workshop C: Health care chaplaincy

Facilitator: Mr Mohinder Singh Chana, Network of Sikh Organisations, IFN Trustee and IFN FCF Moderator

Presenters: The Revd Mark Burleigh, Chair of the Network for Pastoral, Spiritual and Religious Care in Health and Head of Chaplaincy & Bereavement Services at Leicester's hospitals; and Swaminathan, Hindu Forum of Britain and Chaplain, London North West University Health Care Trust

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Mr Mohinder Singh Chana welcomed participants to the discussion group.

The Revd Mark Burleigh offered his presentation. A copy of his PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and a summary of his points is below:

- I have been a healthcare chaplain for over 26 years, working across Leicester, which is a very diverse city. My current role is Head of Chaplaincy & Bereavement Services. This extends across Acute, Mental Health and Community Hospitals. [Slide 2] I was also President of the national College of Health Care Chaplains for 6 years.
- We have a very diverse team of hospital chaplains in Leicester, including the first paid non-religious chaplain in the NHS. [Slide 3] There are also volunteers from faiths not represented in the paid team, including Baha'i, Buddhist, Jain and Jewish.
- The week before the first national lockdown was very hectic. The chaplaincy had to take immediate action. All Sunday services were stopped and volunteers were no longer allowed to visit. We are still trying to support volunteers online through Zoom coffee mornings. [Slide 4] Not so much in Leicester, but in many

healthcare settings, the suspension of volunteering meant that representation within chaplaincy teams became much less diverse because not all faiths are represented on the paid team.

- We had to get used to wearing PPE [Slide 5]. For my first visit to ITU after the lockdown I went to attend a man who had been pronounced brain dead and whose life support machine was going to be switched off. His son was not allowed to visit and he had asked that someone at least go to say a prayer. I had to change into scrubs, change my shoes and to wear a hairnet, a gown and double gloves.
- We also had to make changes in the office, for instance to ensure social distancing. [Slide 6]
- We had to get used to using different means to communicate with people. [Slide 7] We found ourselves representing families to dying patients, when families were not allowed to attend but chaplains were. We were often on the phone to families supporting them in their distress. We lost the sense of being able to touch patients. [Slide 8] With gloves on, this was not the same.
- There were family liaison staff keeping families up to date with how their loved ones were [Slide 9] but families often rang us and asked us to go and sit with their relatives, or, for example, to take their relative a Qur'an cube, a Bible cube, or Hindu prayers on an mp3 player.
- The number of referrals we were receiving increased significantly. [Slide 10] Some of these were from faith leaders who were not able to visit members of their community and some were from families. However, what increased the most was our support for staff, including informal chats, conversations in corridors and just generally checking how doctors and nurses and other staff were coping. This

increased about fivefold. The Trust also has a Wellbeing Team to support staff.

- The pandemic has had an impact on our ward volunteers. [Slide 11] Of those shown in this slide, three more have said that they will not be returning. This is partly because of age but also because after a year people re-evaluate.

One of the long term impacts of the pandemic will be finding new ways of working, which can be a positive. There are likely to be fewer face to face meetings in the future and Zoom and Teams are likely to become more of a permanent feature. [Slide 12] I personally prefer face to face meetings, but hybrid is likely to be the future pattern.

I hope that there will be a higher profile for chaplaincy in the future because its profile has certainly been raised across the pandemic. [Slide 13] This slide shows a photograph used for social media when East Midlands Today did a series of profiles on 'unsung heroes'. We don't believe we are heroes, we are just doing our job.

We also need to come to terms with the fact that the workforce is very tired from the past year. We need to be there to continue to support the staff in the longer term. [Slide 14]

Mr Chana thanked Mr Burleigh for his presentation and invited any questions or comments. Responses from Mr Burleigh are in italics.

- Given that a number of Quaker chaplains (mainly in prisons, but also some in hospitals) are volunteers, what do you think is the future for volunteer chaplains?

In Leicester we have adopted a risk-based approach. Any volunteers within high risk categories are not able to volunteer unless they have had both vaccinations at least 3 weeks prior to volunteering. Also, it is dependent on the risk of the role being undertaken. For example, some volunteers are now leading Friday prayers but have not returned to the wards. The

Trust is beginning to consider mealtime volunteers. It is likely that volunteers will be fully welcome again but many may have stood down by then, necessitating more recruitment. Volunteering might also need to become more focused, responding to specific requests, rather than visiting wards generally, in order to avoid cross-contamination.

- When Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge became a trauma centre and the staff were dealing with much higher intensity situations more of the time, the chaplaincy team had needed to provide much more support. This had been similar during the pandemic. To what extent do the chaplaincy team in Leicester have the capacity to support clinical staff and how are they being supported in this?

The Trust's Wellbeing Team has been offering support to the chaplains across the Trust. Also, there are some aspects of the role that chaplains would usually be doing, that they are not currently doing. For instance, they are not currently delivering as much training, nor travelling to attend meetings. So, in terms of time, there has been time to support clinical staff when needed. However, the chaplains, like the staff, are tired. There are also some tensions within the chaplaincy, as there are across the country, in terms of visiting COVID positive patients.

Swaminathan then offered his presentation on Hindu experiences of providing chaplaincy during the pandemic. A summary of his points is below:

- I work as a chaplain for the London North West University Health Care Trust, which covers the Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow, the Ealing Hospital in Southall, the Central Middlesex Hospital in Park Royal and other community hospitals in the area.
- Brent and Harrow are very religiously diverse areas and we are a multi faith chaplaincy. The chaplaincy has two full

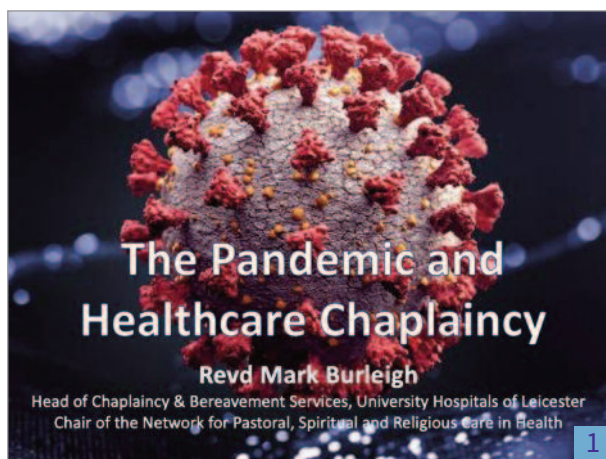
time Christian chaplains, as well as part-time Hindu, Jewish and Muslim chaplains. There are also volunteer chaplains, including from the Jain tradition. There are chaplains from 9 faiths in all.

- We also have a multi faith user group, which meets every 3 months. Unfortunately, this has not been able to meet across the last year.
- Many of the issues we have faced, have been the same as those described by the Revd Burleigh. It has been a very difficult time.
- One of the concerns has been about going from vulnerable patient to vulnerable patient and putting people in danger. The hospital has been very helpful in providing PPE, including made to measure masks. It also provided iPads to interact with patients when face to face visits were not possible.
- No visitors were allowed to enter the hospital and the clinical staff were very busy. So, the chaplains were often liaising with families to update them about their relatives.
- The local community has generously given donations and also food for staff.
- COVID-19 has affected all communities, people of all faiths.
- As a chaplaincy we have dealt with many issues. One Hindu patient was mistakenly given an omelette and her husband wrote to us about it. We were able to speak with the relevant team and to ensure that any information was taken when patients were admitted, so that this would not happen again.
- It is important that patients have someone to speak on their behalf when they are not able to do so.
- Our hospital is very large and there are many wards that now are Covid free, so

as Chaplains we are able to walk freely between patients.

Mr Chana thanked both speakers and invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points were made. Responses from Mr Burleigh are in italics.

- The Woolf Institute runs a lot of training courses, including end of life training for hospital staff. They work with the police and healthcare services. The cultural and religious needs of people at end of life are very important and more training in this area is needed. All hospital and care staff need to be more aware of cultural and religious issues in order to break down barriers.
- Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge provides good training for chaplaincy staff, but there has not been as much time for this because of the pandemic. Pastoral care for people working in hospitals is very important. In some hospitals this falls to the chaplains who do not necessarily have the training or time to provide it.
- Chaplaincy provision seems to have varied in different areas. Chaplains at the hospital in York were not allowed to provide end of life care. It is not clear whether the NHS had overall guidance or whether individual hospitals were making their own decisions. *Particularly in the first lockdown, some NHS Trusts decided that chaplains were not essential staff and so were not allowed to visit, but that has changed over time.*

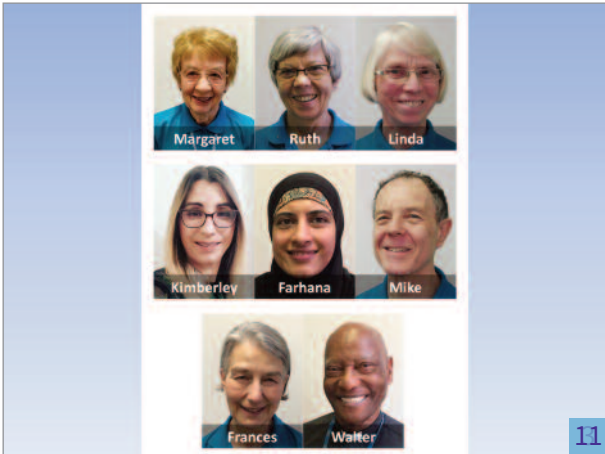




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Morning Workshop D: Vaccination and BAME health COVID matters

Facilitator: Rabbi Maurice Michaels, Faith Links Bournemouth and Poole and IFN Trustee

Presenters: Haidar Lapcha, Programme Manager and Communications Lead for the Community Champions project, Strengthening Faith Institutions; Vinay Shah, Institute of Jainology, One Jain Initiative and IFN FCF Vice-Moderator - How the Jain community has responded to the vaccine rollout

Rapporteur: Leonie Lewis MBE, IFN Trustee

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Rabbi Maurice Michaels welcomed participants and invited them to introduce themselves.

Mr Haidar Lapcha offered a presentation using PowerPoint slides. It has not been possible to include a copy of these in this report. The presentation gave information on a number of contexts in which Strengthening Faith Institutions and others have been helping those communities most badly affected by COVID and boost vaccine uptake within these communities. In January the Government announced that Strengthening Faith Institutions would be one of the charities funded to support “councils in working with grassroot organisations and community leaders, to ensure that communities understand how the pandemic is being tackled and feel empowered to take action to keep themselves safe.” The work was done through an extension of the Community Champions scheme, identifying new community champions where they did not already exist, to “tap into their local networks to provide advice about COVID-19 and the vaccines”. More information can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/community-champions-to-give-covid-19-vaccine-advice-and-boost-take-up>.

Rabbi Michaels thanked Mr Lapcha.

As noted earlier in this report, due to technical problems the presentation that Mr Vinay Shah of the Institute of Jainology should have been able to give to this workshop was not given. This was through the One Jain Initiative of the Institute of Jainology and would have reflected the important work that the Jain community had been doing on the vaccination front. The presentation notes are reproduced below.

Introduction to OneJAIN

OneJAIN is an initiative of the Institute of Jainology (IOJ) to bring together all 33 Jain organisations in the UK, so that they may interact with government and other faiths with one voice.

During the past year, OneJAIN has focused on supporting the Jain communities through the pandemic, as well as the UK Census 2021 and the current COVID vaccines. I briefly describe these activities below.

I. Supporting OneJAIN organisations

OneJAIN has supported its communities during the current pandemic in two different ways:

a) *OneJAIN Awards*

Many Jain organisations and individuals supported their local communities and key workers by delivering groceries, meals and medicines to frontline workers and vulnerable members of the wider communities wherever required.

b) Jain festival days

OneJAIN worked together with Jain organisations by creating spiritual, religious, social and cultural programs for all age groups in the community. These events gave the entire community a sense of togetherness and celebration at a time of lockdown.

II. COVID Vaccines

OneJAIN has established the Jain Health Initiative (JHI), to help the community better understand the pandemic. JHI is run by a steering committee including doctors, pharmacists and researchers. The webinars, held in English, Gujarati and Hindi, were viewed by an estimated 50,000 people and explained both safety, efficacy and importance of vaccinations. They further explained the implementation of Government guidelines to prevent spread of disease in the community.

OneJAIN members have also supported their local communities by making their facilities available as vaccination centres. It is estimated that in excess of 100,000 people in wider communities have been vaccinated at these places.



These activities have been supported by our website:
<https://www.onejainuk.org/covid>

III. Census 2021

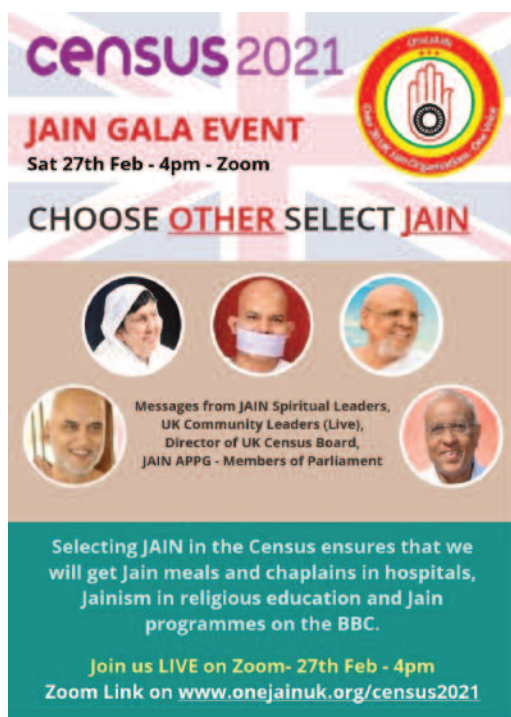
For over 3 years, OneJAIN has promoted the Jain campaign for members of the community to identify themselves correctly, to ensure that hospitals, schools and local authorities cater for them when allocating their funding priorities.

OneJAIN has promoted these activities through webinars held jointly with the Office of National Statistics, Whatsapp and email campaigns, and support lines. The collateral can be seen here:
<https://www.onejainuk.org/census2021>.

To involve all members of the community, competitions for children have been held, and videos for those whose primary language is not English. Video messages from Bob Blackman MP and Gareth Thomas MP, both of the Jain All Party Parliamentary Group were also received.

OneJAIN estimates that there are 65,000 Jains in the UK.

A promotional poster for a COVID-19, Vaccines, Q&A webinar. The poster features the OneJAIN logo, the text "32 Organisations Together", and the title "COVID-19, VACCINES, Q&A". It also mentions "Know the Latest in Gujarati" and "SUNDAY 10TH JANUARY AT 8PM UK". Three medical experts are listed: Miss Jyoti Shah, Dr Anuja Shah, and Dr Khyati Bakhai. The poster includes a YouTube link: www.onejainuk.org/health.



In discussion the following points were also noted:

- Faith leaders are able, because of their position within their communities, to communicate messages with impact.
- There are many factors that can affect people in terms of how they respond to the offer of vaccine. It is important to be aware of those.
- Hesitancy can be linked to negative experiences of vaccines, concern about their contents, issues relating to testing, and concerns about particular possible side-effects.
- Messages need to respond to the genuine questions that people have.
- Making clear the permissibility – and desirability – of vaccination from the different faith perspectives is very important.
- Messages need to be carefully targeted, including taking into account language and cultural factors. Existing relationships with and within faith communities can be a solid basis on

which to build but they are not so strong in all cases.

- Some groups are, or are perceived as, 'hard to reach' and extra steps need to be taken to engage.
- It is important to make it as easy as possible for people to take up the offer of vaccination.
- Local community champions are people who are well placed to engage with faith groups and also with the NHS and with local authority structure.
- Faith community venues are helpful to consider for use for vaccine centres and clinics.
- Faith groups have been doing some great work getting the message out on social media, including direct encouragement to take up the vaccine and also sharing images of known figures in their communities receiving the vaccine.
- Faith leaders are playing an important role in each of the four nations, although aspects of the framework are different.
- There are complex ethical issues involved in, eg, decisions on order of offer of vaccine. There has been faith input to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation which advises UK health departments on immunisation.
- Close working by local inter faith bodies with the relevant authorities can be helpful.
- All faiths have a commitment to the health and welfare of their members and others and that can be a good basis for cooperative action.

Morning Workshop E: Capturing the faith response to the pandemic – surveys, research, blogs

Facilitator: Mr Karl Wightman, Baha'i Community of the UK.

Presenters: Professor Paul Weller, Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Emeritus Professor, University of Derby, Professor in the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, Research Fellow in Religion and Society, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford and IFN Trustee; and Ms Dawn Waterman, Archives and Heritage Manager, Board of Deputies of British Jews.

Rapporteur: Ms Carrie Gealy, Inter Faith Network

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Mr Karl Wightman welcomed participants to the discussion group.

Professor Paul Weller offered his presentation. A copy of his PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and a summary of his points is below:

- There is a lot of ongoing work, such as surveys and reports, relating to COVID-19 and faith communities. Examples of these can be seen on the slides. Many of the surveys have already closed but some remain open and are active.
- There is much research focusing on the UK and some specific nations such as Ireland and England, as well as local surveys.
- Many surveys are focusing on the impact on BAME communities

- The Office for National Statistics breaks COVID-related figures down by ethnic and religious belief.
- I have been involved in the West Midlands survey working with Coventry University on *Innovation and Enterprise Across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19* (see report at https://issuu.com/universityofwolverhampton/docs/wmca_full_report_soc_econ_jan2021_final).
- Single faith traditions have also been responding. There has been some research and a number of reports on Christian communities, as well as at least two published reports on how Muslim communities have been responding to COVID-19. It has been difficult to find surveys or reports relating specifically to Hindu, Sikh, Pagan or other religion or belief groups.
- There is some research looking at the impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary and charity sector.
- Although it isn't possible to present all of the findings from the research and reports, this gives a flavour of the research going on in the UK.

Mr Wightman thanked Professor Weller for his presentation and invited questions. Responses from Professor Weller are in italics.

- How long before there is research into the global response to the pandemic? *There are lots of one-off initiatives going on to capture the responses to the pandemic which can sometimes overlap. Ideally, it would be good to have something with all responses to the pandemic in it to have something to draw upon.*
- Do you have any tips for others in inter faith wanting to do their own research? *If undertaking research in this area, it is important for inter faith groups to be as*

rigorous as possible in planning their research methods and as careful as possible in considering the research ethics involved, in relation to which research undertaken in partnership with higher education institutions could be helpful.

Ms Dawn Waterman offered her presentation. A copy of her PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and a summary of her points is below:

- ‘Hidden Treasures: Celebrating Jewish Archives in Britain’ is a project by the Board of Deputies of British Jews.
- As part of the project, the Board of Deputies has created a living COVID-19 archive, collecting digital material on how Jewish communities are responding to the pandemic.
- The archive is capturing the efforts by the Jewish communities to help vulnerable members of the community.
- One example is of self-isolation cards to fill in and send to vulnerable members of the Jewish community with contact information and ways they are willing to help them, such as grocery shopping, a phone conversation, posting letters and gathering supplies.
- Some local authorities have translated government guidelines into Yiddish to be more easily accessible for Orthodox members of the community who will not use technology.
- Many progressive Jewish communities have found that their congregations have expanded hugely after moving online as people have been able to Zoom-in more accessibly.
- Useful posters have been produced such as ‘How to do the 4 Purim Mitzvot with COVID-19 safety measures’ for Orthodox community members.
- There has been a drive-by family experience for Purim.

- I will be giving further thought to the cataloguing, curating, display and accessibility of this archive.

- The archive will be dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Pinter who died of COVID-19.

Mr Wightman thanked Dawn Waterman for her presentation and invited questions and a general discussion.

In general discussion the following points were made:

- Sometimes fragments of information get lost to history but this archive gives a living sense of the actuality of life. That is remarkable and should be an example that other people should follow within their own communities, not just for historical interest but to learn from and about how faith communities deal with changing situations and bring in flexibility in tight frameworks.
- The Orthodox Jewish community used signs in Yiddish and English, which the local authority had done. That is something which could be a lesson for other local authorities on how to reach out within their communities.
- In November, the All Faiths Network put together a book on contributions called ‘People of Faith: Rising Above COVID-19’ with chapters on Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Scientology and two chapters on humanitarian responses. It is hoped that this book will contribute to the research that is taking place.
- The expansion of attendance is something which raises a question of whether this is particular to the Jewish community or if it extends across other faith communities. At the beginning of lockdown most people felt that faith community engagement would drop off, but there have been many stories to the contrary and that the circle of engagement within faith communities has widened.

- Some faith communities and individuals have resisted the concept of online worship, but it is important to consider where the future is taking us. We can't go back. Churches have found that the hybrid way is something that is a real possibility, using both physical and recorded services so people that are subjected to the virus can stay in the safety of their own home. Some

denominations will struggle with that, but we have to look to the future.

- Research is important. The first presentation included a long list of research projects, but that is across the whole country. More is still needed. We need to consider what the local research is that we need to do in order to shine a light on faith contributions, so that these do not get lost.

**Religion or Belief and COVID-19:
Some Surveys, Other Research, Reports,
Sources and Resources**

**Inter Faith Network for the UK National Meeting
Faith Communities and COVID-19:
Learning From the Journey
23rd March 2021 (by Zoom)**

Paul Weller, Cert Ed, MA, MPhil, PhD, DLitt

Emeritus Professor, University of Derby
Professor, Centre for Trust, Peace & Social Relations, Coventry University.
Research Fellow in Religion and Society, Regent's Park College,
and Associate Member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford.
Director, Religion and Belief Research and Training Ltd.
(with acknowledgements to Carrie Gealy, Inter Faith Network for the UK Intern)

Regent's Park College OXFORD UNIVERSITY OF DERBY COVENTRY UNIVERSITY TRUST, PEACE & SOCIAL RELATIONS

**COVID-19 and Religion or Belief (Inclusive)
Surveys and Reports
[Open and Ongoing]**

Faiths Forum London, Strengthening Faith Institutions and Civil Society Consulting - **Faith Communities: Covid-19 Impact & Future Support Survey**. Survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SYVLDMMK>
[Open – unspecified close date]

Manchester Metropolitan University - **British Ritual Innovation under Covid-19 (BRIC-19)** Research project examining how British religious communities have adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions it has imposed. Survey link: <https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>
[Open – unspecified close date]

British Religion in Numbers - **Counting Religion in Britain: Coronavirus Chronicles**. Link to reports: <http://www.brin.ac.uk/news/> Some of the most relevant articles are December 2020: Multinational study of the pandemic's impact on religious faith; January 2021: Multinational pew poll on Covid-19's impact on religious faith; and February 2021: Are things really looking up that much for the Churches?
[Ongoing reporting]

**COVID-19 and Religion or Belief
Inclusive Surveys and Reports
[Closed with Reports Published or Coming]**

Queens University Northern Ireland Dr Gladys Ganiel - **'People Still Need Us': A Report on a Survey of Faith Leaders on the Island of Ireland during the Covid-19 Pandemic**. Link for more information: <https://www.catholicireland.net/faith-matters-in-covid-crisis-say-faith-leaders-in-queens-university-survey/>
[Closed - Published report accessible]

Goldsmiths University - **Keeping the Faith: Partnership Between Faith Groups and Local Authorities During and Beyond the Pandemic**. Report link: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa7ae58266c07fe6b48eb76/t/5fabcc1475ae8b92bc6f4f30c/1605091658307/APPG_CovidReport_Full_V4.pdf
[Closed - Published report accessible]

Stephen Timms MP - House of Commons survey: **Response of Faith Groups During the Covid-19 Outbreak**. Link for more information: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2JBDAX/>
[Closed with intervention made to House of Commons]

The Good Faith Partnership; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - **Faith in Communities: Plans for Covid-19 Recovery**. Link for more information: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LWVNSSZ>
[Closed – report still to be published]

**COVID-19 Religion or Belief Inclusive
with BAME Focus Surveys and Reports
[Open and Closed]**

Ipsos Mori; Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity; University of Manchester; University of St Andrews; University of Sussex - **The Evidence for Equality National Survey: Documenting the lives of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in a Time of Crisis**. Survey link: <https://evenssurveyinfo.ipsos-mori.com/> (Closes May 2021) Link for more information: <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/ethnic-and-religious-minority-people-during-covid-19/>
[Open – unspecified close date]

FaithStar (Sheffield) Report on **Impact of COVID-19 on BAME and Faith Communities**. Report link: <https://www.faithstarllp.com/covid-19>
[Closed - Published report accessible]

**COVID-19 Religion or Belief
with Christian Focus Surveys and Reports
[Open or Coming]**

York St John University: **Coronavirus, Church & You** (launching 7 May) Survey link: https://yorksi.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cAYhUS8YSyn0ir3 More information can be found at: https://baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/579128/Coronavirus_Church_and.aspx
[Survey to open from 7th May 2021]

Paul Weller and Sanjee Perera, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations Coventry University, funded by the British Academy, on **The Organisational, Financial and Human Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Christian Faith-Based Organization Service Sector in Great Britain** Link for more information and from where survey will begin: <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2020/christian-fbos-and-covid-19/>
[Survey delayed - to open soon]

**COVID-19 Religion or Belief
With Christian Focus Surveys and Reports
[Closed with Reports or Reports Coming]**

Evangelical Alliance UK survey and report on **Changing Church: Responding to the coronavirus crisis**. Report link: <https://www.eauk.org/changing-church/autumn-survey>
[Closed – Published report accessible]

Catholic Voices - Survey and Report on **Covid-19 & Church**. Survey link: <https://www.catholicvoices.org.uk/survey> Report link: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d4852755541c10001c7d071/t/5f57527b8063d02159311569/1599558270783/Coronavirus%2C+Church+%26+You+Survey+Report.pdf>
[Closed – Published report accessible]

University of Exeter Centre for Rural Policy Research: **COVID-19, Christian Faith and Wellbeing Report**. Report link: https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/research/microsites/centreforruralpolicyresearch/pdfs/COVID-19_Christian_Faith_and_Wellbeing.pdf
[Closed – Published report accessible]

University of York; Church of England; Historic England; Association of English Cathedrals; National Churches Trust and Historic Religious Buildings Alliance - **COVID-19, Churches and Communities: Current Needs and Planning for Recovery**. Link: <https://churchesandcovid.org> [Closed – report still to be published]

COVID-19, Religion or Belief with Some Other Than Inclusive or Christian-Specific Focus Surveys and Reports [closed with reports]

Muslim Council of Britain - **Together in Tribulation: British Muslims and the COVID-19 pandemic report**. Report link: <https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Together-in-Tribulation-British-Muslims-and-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>
[Published report accessible]

Muslim Charities Forum (2020), **The Neighbours Next Door: The Story of Muslim Organisations Responding to COVID-19**, Muslim Charities Forum, London. Report link: <https://www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk/covid-19-the-neighbours-next-door-report/>
[Published report accessible]

Institute for Jewish Policy Research has had a **COVID Survey Programme**, with reports so far on COVID-19 Mortality and Jews: A Global Overview of the First Wave of the Coronavirus Pandemic, March to May 2020 (2020); Jewish Community Income: How is it Being Affected by the Pandemic? (2021); Moving Beyond COVID-19: What Needs to be Done to Help Preserve and Enhance Jewish Communal Life? (2021); Jewish Employment Patterns: How the COVID-19 Pandemic is Affecting Jewish People's Working Lives (2021)
[Published reports accessible at: <https://www.ijsr.org.uk/>]

7

COVID-19 Voluntary & Community Sector National Surveys and Reports [Open]

Nottingham Trent University Business School; National Council for Voluntary Organisations; Sheffield Hallam University - **Impacts of Covid-19 on voluntary sector and social enterprises to be explored in major new study**. Survey link: <http://cpwop.org.uk/what-we-do/projects-and-publications/covid-19-vcse-organisation-responses/>
[Open - unspecified close date]

Cardiff University and the University of Bristol, with funding from UK Research & Innovation via the Economic and Social Research Council - **Bereavement During COVID-19: A National Study of Bereaved People's Experiences and the Impact on Bereavement Services**. Calling for people of different faith communities to answer the survey. Survey link: <https://www.covidbereavement.com>
[Open until 30 April 2021]

8

COVID-19 Voluntary & Community Sector Local/Regional Surveys & Reports [Open and published reports]

Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland Impact Survey: survey to take stock of how you and your faith, or civil society, organisation, are doing; and to understand what impact it so far. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/M3GNQCCQ>
[Open - unspecified close date]

Wolverhampton University Institute for Community Research and Development; Birmingham Voluntary Services Council; Coventry University Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations for West Midlands Combined Authority: **Innovation and Enterprise Across the Social Economy in Recovery From COVID-19**. Report link: <https://www.bvsc.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=7e9c92b5-976f-439b-9937-66049d9cedec>
[Published report accessible]

Surrey Community Action - Surrey's Voluntary Sector Covid-19 Impact and Resilience Survey: **Exploring the Impact of Covid-19 on Surrey's Voluntary Community and Faith Sector and the Resilience of the Sector Post-Covid-19**. Report link: <http://www.surreyca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/VCFSS-Covid-19-Impact-and-Resilience-Report.pdf>
[Published report accessible]

9

COVID-19, Religion or Belief Inclusive Global Sources and Resources [Ongoing]

The Berkeley Centre for Religion, Peace and Global Affairs **COVID-19 Resource Repository**. Resources link: <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/topics/covid-19>
[Ongoing reporting]

World Health Organization's **Global Literature on Coronavirus Disease database**. Resources link: [https://search.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/resource/en/ppmedrxiv-20204495](https://search.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/?output=site&lang=en&from=0&sort=&format=summary&count=20&fb=&page=1&skfp=&index=tw&q=religion+and+COVID&search_form_submit=Includes e.g. publication on COVID mortality risk England and Wales by religious group)
[Ongoing reporting]

Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities **Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action COVID-19 Initiative Reference Document for Religious Leaders and Faith Communities Guidance**, ("living document") Ed 1, April 2020
<https://iflfc.com/resources/multi-religious-faith-in-action-covid-19-initiative-reference-document-ed-1/>
[Ongoing reporting]

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celebratingjewisharchives.org
@seethetreasures



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celebratingjewisharchives.org
@seethetreasures
dawn.waterman@bod.org.uk



9

Afternoon Workshop A: Faith groups and leaders working with local authorities

Facilitator: The Revd Mark Umpleby, North
Kirklees Interfaith

Presenters: Mr Carlo Schroder, Rochdale
Borough Council, Ms Samra Kanwal,
Greater Together Manchester; and, Mr Ryan
Charlton, Policy Lead for Community
Resilience in the Cabinet Office

Rapporteur: Jim Robertson, North East
Regional Faiths Network

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Revd Mark Umpleby welcomed delegates
to the discussion group.

Mr Carlo Schroder and **Ms Samra Kanwal**
offered their presentation. A summary of
their points is below:

- Under the Safer Communities Partnership the Council works with faith communities to promote cohesion so that people in Rochdale will be able to live, work learn and socialise in harmony. This has been a long-term project.
- Cuts to funding from Government since 2010 have had an impact on that work. Lack of resources also led the local Multi Faith Partnership to re-look at its remit.
- The pattern of council officer engagement with faith communities had been affected by changes in the infrastructure that supported the voluntary sector. That most recent infrastructure body, Action Together Rochdale, was formed in 2019 and has become significant in the response to COVID-19.
- In Rochdale, the volunteering sector is strongly white and secular in make up. Faith communities, by contrast, are predominantly made up of people from BAME backgrounds. The pandemic has given an opportunity to bring these together.
- At the beginning of lockdown in March last year conversations were established, building on an important working partnership between the Council and Near Neighbours. A Zoom meeting was arranged by the Council and Near Neighbours and invitations were extended to others. The Chair of the Multi Faith Partnership in Rochdale was invited to chair the meetings. It was important that the Council did not lead but a trusted connecting body.
- The agenda of the meetings was very open and the purpose was to develop conversation. They went on to be held at 10am every Tuesday morning for three to four months with around 30 people taking part. Agendas developed to respond to a number of issues such as Black Lives Matter, schools, and digital poverty.
- Many of those attending these meetings, and a number of other forums hosted by faith communities, were invited, alongside local councillors, to the Covid-19 Engagement Group, which was a collaboration with Public Health.
- The COVID-19 Engagement Group includes public health officials, councillors, council officers, and community group members. It has a communications team. They engaged in direct community engagement around testing sites and encouraging people to be vaccinated.
- When the guidance came out about opening places of worship safely this was an opportunity for the Council to engage with communities through the partners in this group. Funding was made available by the Council to help enable people to make those places safe.
- Teams went out, giving people masks and engaging in important conversations about the key messages in relation to the

virus. There was some resistance in communities to the messaging so having trusted individuals engaged and engaging was really important.

- This community engagement has had a really significant impact on the take up of vaccines, especially through the use of faith community venues.
- Within all of this it has been obvious that language, ethnicity, age, class and faith all have played a significant part. The voice of faith has been clear and important. Speaking about faith increases trust, as it is a powerful binding force.

Mr Umpleby thanked Mr Schroder and Ms Kanwal for their presentation and invited questions. Responses from Mr Schroder and Ms Kanwal are in italics.

- In your experience is there need for infrastructure support for faith communities?
Yes, many faith communities have lost resources during the pandemic and some feel isolated. It is also a new world out there with new rules and regulations. This makes people fearful and the best way to deal with that is through building positive relationships. The reformed voluntary sector has delivered this support and training.
- Has the work of bringing together the voluntary sector, faith communities and minority groups been recognised by the Council and will this lead to a commitment to fund these partnerships in the future?
The Council has committed officer time and other partners have also committed time and resources. New funding is being made available but Rochdale is a deprived area and the resources are limited and the need great. The Respond, Repair and Recover Fund has been established, giving grants of up to £1,000. The Council is being challenged to do more.

Mr Ryan Charlton offered his presentation. A copy of his PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and a summary of his points is below:

- The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) supports the Prime Minister and Cabinet and leads the wider government effort on civil emergencies planning and response. Its aim is to build resilience in the response to, and recovery from, potential disruptive challenges of all types at home and abroad.
- This is delivered through a single legislative framework, the Civil Contingencies Act, and also through assessing risks that could impact the UK and how to mitigate them, and understanding the different capabilities needed to deal with the consequences of emergencies at a national and local level.
- The Secretariat has a coordinating role and also one supporting training needed to respond to civil emergencies. This takes place through the Emergency Planning College.
- The Secretariat also provides, within the context of the relevant legislation, the framework for local response and works on statutory and non-statutory guidance that supports local responders. This includes setting standards for response and for recovery.
- It also produces a national risk assessment which can be seen in the national risk register. This looks forward over a two year period outlining the key risks that could affect the UK, and indicates actions the public could take to mitigate risk and build resilience.
- We support colleagues in MHCLG in their engagement with local resilience structures.
- The Secretariat takes the local focused work forward on a basis of subsidiarity. Decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level with coordination at the highest level needed. Local

- responders are the essential building blocks of emergency response.
- Community resilience is enabled when people are empowered to harness local resources to help themselves and their communities to respond to disruptive challenges, in a way that complements the activity of statutory services. Community resilience activity requires a participatory approach to emergency management. Faith groups play an essential role in this approach. The government is committed to working with partners to ensure that communities can become resilient.
 - CCS is committed to building and supporting resilience and championing and sharing successful approaches to responding to civil emergencies.
 - Faith groups have been key in supporting communities and vulnerable people during the pandemic. An example was at Dover over the Christmas period when drivers were stuck. Faith communities responded at short notice to support people by providing food and other essential items to complement the response of local authorities and emergency responders.
 - Faith communities have been key in supporting the most vulnerable. For example, their members have helped with shopping for those who can't get out, phone services and befriending support. They also amplify the work of local authorities and work across the voluntary sector with non-faith based groups. We have seen the role that they have in communicating key messages to combat mis- and dis- information and how they are helping with the vaccine hesitant. They are an important conduit of public health information.
 - Faith groups form important community networks and they provide routes for engagement with large parts of society and can be a focal point for community. Faith group leaders are often trusted and important voices during emergencies.
 - CCS recognises that there are faith groups in communities that may want to work independently of local government, but where faith groups are willing to act as partners with emergency responders, and are capable of contributing their capabilities on a voluntary basis, we fully advocate that emergency responders, responsible for emergency planning, take time to understand the faith communities in their area and their capabilities that they bring – their physical infrastructure, resource assets, provision of expertise and influence – and how they act as a conduit for information, supporting the delivery of services that includes providing pastoral and holistic support.
 - What CCS would like to understand is where there has been engagement between local resilience structures and faith based groups – what does that look like? What have the approaches used been and what are the challenges? CCS is really interested to hear about case studies and examples and good practice that it can share with the resilience practice community and build on for the future.

Mr Umpleby thanked Mr Charlton for his presentation and invited questions. Responses from Mr Charlton are in italics.

- Given the work done before, why when the pandemic arose was the Civil Contingencies Secretariat not the lead in organising the local response?
The Secretariat works under the principle of subsidiarity therefore the response is led at the local tier.
- How was risk mitigated for those moved from hospital into social care and for those moved from different care settings, including those for staff who were the most vulnerable? Is there a departmental view on this?
The Secretariat is not the right body to answer that question. That would be a question that would need putting to the Department of Health and Social Care.

- Is there a danger that we see things in silos when resilience is much broader than that? Does that call into question the role of the Secretariat?
CCS has a central coordinating role as part of the Cabinet Office and the government has not been working in silos as there has been cross department collaboration.
- How do you feel the coordination of the response to the pandemic across the four nations of the UK has gone and how has that related to faith communities?
Community resilience is a devolved matter and there are working groups looking at how the work of each nation can be amplified by a four nations approach. Different nations have their own ways of engaging faith communities, MHCLG's Faith and Integration Team would be best placed to respond to that in relation to England.
- Is there a way that a whole faith community can offer its resources to the CCS or is it just through local working?
Working with local responders, local resilience forums and local agencies is the right approach. If we wanted to look more broadly at faith engagement and do a consultation we'd work with IFN to achieve that, although as stated above MHCLG's Faith and Integration Team should be the first point of contact for a broader discussion about engagement with government.
- faith communities can respond to the vulnerable.
- The continual changes called for on the COVID-19 roadmap was challenging from a local authority perspective, calling for a constant need to readapt to the new way forward and the rules of engagement.
- Faith communities also experienced challenges. It was not always clear what consultation had gone on before requirements were changed – sometimes at short notice. For example, Eid was effectively cancelled as a community and family event the night before, and this caused bewilderment, confusion and resentment.
- Not enough thought is given to those faith communities that are not consulted because they are effectively not recognised. For example, Faith Action's response to the Pagan community was that they were not part of the 'big eight' and would not be involved. This caused real distress.

Mr Umpleby opened the workshop to discussion and the following points were made:

- The pandemic has shown us how much we have previously been working in silos. It has made us rethink that and look at new ways of working. Everything has had to become very focused on the local authority level so that bodies can become very practical and targeted.
- Faith communities have identified a hiatus between identification of needs and response. The pandemic has helped to open important conversations on how to respond and on issues such as how

Faith groups and local resilience structures – the pandemic and wider engagement

IFN National Meeting
23 March 2021

OFFICIAL

1

The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS)

- Our Purpose
- Our role in local resilience

2

2

Community Resilience policy as part of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat

- Community Resilience in civil contingencies
- The National Resilience context for Community Resilience

3

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Faith groups supporting communities and the vulnerable during the pandemic

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The role of faith groups in supporting the development of community resilience

- Reflections on what has worked well
- What approaches have been used
- What have been the challenges?

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Afternoon Workshop B: Wellbeing and safety, from loneliness to domestic abuse: responding on an inter faith basis

Facilitator: Marigold Bentley, Assistant General Secretary, Quaker Peace and Social Witness

Presenters: Mr Jeeves Rohilla, Faiths Forum for London and Strengthening Faith Institutions and Ms Tara Corry, Women's Interfaith Network; Ms Elizabeth Fewkes, Near Neighbours West London Coordinator and Ms Nighat Khan, CEO of New Vision for Women.

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Marigold Bentley welcomed participants to the workshop. She explained that this was a sensitive topic and encouraged everyone to be gentle and to think carefully about how they spoke with and treated one another.

Mr Jeeves Rohilla of Faiths Forum for London (FFL) and **Ms Tara Corry** of the Women's Interfaith Network (WIN) offered their presentation on 'An inter faith response to domestic abuse'. A copy of their PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and a summary of their points is below:

- There are not many inter faith responses specifically to domestic abuse.
- Following the restrictions imposed in March 2020, calls to Refuge, the UK's largest domestic abuse charity increased rapidly by 120%.
- On the back of these statistics FFL and WIN joined together with Faiths United and Strengthening Faith Institutions on a project to raise awareness of domestic abuse. These organisations are not specialists in domestic abuse but wanted to initiate an inter faith response, beginning with signposting especially for people in faith communities.

- The project started with a video – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeTLBfeB1ow>.
- A support pack was then created, which included signposts to specialist organisations that focus on domestic abuse within religious communities.
- The project also included a social media campaign to raise awareness of the support pack and to spread the messages. This included 17 Instagram graphics and 17 Twitter graphics to ensure language wasn't a barrier to getting the messages out.
- An advisory group of 8 or 9 domestic abuse specialist organisations was created. There is often not enough support and resources for these specialist organisations. A joint statement was produced, and published in *The Independent*, calling for sustainable government funding for specialist domestic abuse organisations, especially for BAME communities and religious groups.
- For a lot of victims from faith communities, when they speak to more secular organisations, they find that the organisations do not understand the cultural and faith-based demands.
- One of the main abuses found within faith communities is spiritual abuse which is comparable to secular emotional abuse. Spiritual abuse is the misuse of religious scriptures to cause abuse to an individual. This is specific to faith communities. Following the joint statement, a webinar series was created to educate faith leaders and others about this type of abuse. Faith leaders gave talks in the webinars and recordings of these can be found on FFL's YouTube channel.
- This project also created a Faiths Against Domestic Abuse Awareness Week which was held from 23 to 27 November coinciding with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against

Women and Girls and the UN's 16-Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

- With the support of Near Neighbours, the project was also able to create training for faith leaders, so that they could support those in their communities suffering from abuse.
- In the future the project plans to continue its webinar series and also the domestic abuse awareness training for faith leaders with a focus on grassroots faith leaders.
- The two key learning points from this project have been that: specialist domestic abuse services are vastly underfunded; and, despite domestic abuse being a taboo subject, it has received enthusiastic support and many faith leaders have been involved.

Marigold Bentley thanked Mr Rohilla and Ms Corry for their presentation and introduced the next speaker.

Ms Elizabeth Fewkes spoke about Near Neighbours work to respond to loneliness. A summary of her points is below:

- Near Neighbours is an organisation that works in multi-faith and multi-ethnic areas to bring people together for better understanding, to build relationships of trust and collaborate on projects to help improve the local community. The main objectives of Near Neighbours are social interaction and social action.
- Near Neighbours funds community groups on the ground who want to work together to see positive change.
- During the pandemic, Near Neighbours was given extra funding to give COVID-19 response grants. One of the areas focused on was supporting the emerging needs of the community during the pandemic. As part of this, Near Neighbours funded groups who were seeking to address social isolation and tackling the loneliness crisis.

- Before the pandemic hit, the UK Government had already identified loneliness as a significant public health issue. This has been exacerbated during the crisis.
- Adults most at risk are those who are young, living alone, on low incomes, out of work and those with mental health conditions. Economic impacts such as job loss and job anxieties are not helping this crisis.
- Having someone to rely on is one of the strongest drivers of overall wellbeing and feeling lonely is strongly linked to poor physical and mental health.

Ms Nighat Khan then spoke about New Vision for Women, a project funded by Near Neighbours. A copy of her PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and summary of her points is below:

- New Vision for Women provides workshops and programmes for women.
- The programmes are about self-development, confidence building, financial empowerment, family learning and now, because of the pandemic, wellbeing.
- Some people have felt the impact of COVID-19 more than others.
- Many women and mothers have experienced isolation in lockdown and needed a safe place for support.
- 'Time for You' is a project that was set up for women finding it difficult to cope during lockdown.
- This included virtual training sessions were held to help with wellness and loneliness. These training sessions covered mindfulness and helping women to focus on the present rather than the uncertain future.
- It also included exercises for women such as keeping a gratitude journal to track

feelings and focus on what there is to be grateful for.

- A professional reflexologist was able to help with breathing exercises and tapping exercises to help relax the mind and deal with anxiety.
- People from different faiths came together during this project, linking faiths and sharing thoughts. Some people who did not have a faith still had a gratitude journal to turn to for sharing thoughts and feelings.
- The project also provided fun activities like learning how to make hand creams at home and utilising things in the kitchen to make face masks and hand sanitizers from organic ingredients.
- New Vision for Women has helped women build new friendships which has helped with isolation and loneliness during the pandemic and given them friends to confide in.

Marigold Bentley thanked Ms Fewkes and Ms Khan for their presentations and invited questions and comments. The following reflections were offered. Responses by the presenters are in italics.

- The definition of religious abuse should be more precise. It can be interpreted differently by different faiths.
The Faiths Against Domestic Abuse project signposts victims to specialist domestic abuse organisations who are literate on religious scriptures and domestic abuse to

ensure that if a victim thinks they have experienced spiritual abuse, they can speak to specialists about this.

- It would be useful if these specialists were more visible. Considering that all faiths have different practices, there needs to be more in the way of guidelines. What do the specialists base their judgements on? *Specialist organisations are generally women who have worked on this for a long time and do have clear knowledge in this area. The Faiths Against Domestic Abuse project recommends that spiritual leaders seek advice from specialists to get training themselves. It is an area that could benefit from more discussion.*
- In Lambeth, the Council provides programmes and courses for safeguarding for women and children and also including domestic abuse. This might be something useful to check out.
- Everyone is doing great work and it is something we should all pick up in our local areas.
- Once a safe space is provided, people feel comfortable to ask for help. Signposting is a very important way to share this information and let others know that they can ask for help and that what they are experiencing should not be happening.

FADA VIDEO

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeTLBfeB1ow>

1



**FAITHS AGAINST
DOMESTIC
ABUSE**



2

IDEAS STAGE

3

IDEAS STAGE

Since the restrictions were imposed in March 2020, calls to Refuge, the UK's largest domestic abuse charity, increased overnight by 120%.

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

5

ACTIVITY STAGE

- 1) VIDEO
- 2) SUPPORT PACK
- 3) SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE THE SUPPORT PACK
- 4) ADVISORY GROUP
- 5) JOINT STATEMENT
- 6) WEBINARS
- 7) FAITHS AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK
- 8) DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING FOR FAITH LEADERS

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

2 & 3) Support Pack & Social Media Campaign

<http://faithsforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FADA-Support-Pack-2020.pdf>

Other Domestic Abuse Support Networks and Helplines

Adhara Network Limited
 Bhai, Bhainiyan in helping Black and Minority Ethnic women, in particular, women from South Asian, Turkish & Indian communities, aged 16-30 years who are at risk of domestic violence and sexual abuse.
 Telephone: 0208 338 0847
 Website: <http://www.adhara.org.uk>

Adhara (UK) Ltd
 Bhai, Bhainiyan in helping Black and Minority Ethnic women (BME) with child and young people forming domestic violence and sexual abuse including forced marriage, honour trafficking, female genital mutilation, gang violence and "honour" based violence.
 Telephone: 020 42 995 182
 Website: <http://www.adhara.org.uk>

Back to Central Genderline - BGC - Domestic Violence & Abuse Specialist
 Back to Central Genderline is a range of organisations from faith groups to local authorities, voluntary organisations and religious, spiritual, pastoral care, and Abuse Awareness Training and support in their cultural life. We can assist in a variety of faith communities, however we offer an inclusive service.
 Website: <http://www.backtocentralgenderline.co.uk>

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

4 & 5) Advisory Group & Joint Statement

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-domestic-abuse-religious-leaders-spiritual-faith-bme-a9533016.html>

Women suffering 'domestic and spiritual abuse' in lockdown, religious leaders warn

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

5) Joint Statement

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-domestic-abuse-religious-leaders-spiritual-faith-bme-a9533016.html>

The statement, which was signed by Sikh Women's Action Network, Jewish Women's Aid, Latin American Women's Right Service, and Women's Interfaith Network among others, adds: "We therefore call for sustainable government funding of specialist domestic abuse services which cater for those from BAME, migrant and faith backgrounds and in addition the education of statutory agencies and the judicial system to aid them in recognising and understanding cultural barriers and honour-based abuse."

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

5) Joint Statement

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-domestic-abuse-religious-leaders-spiritual-faith-bme-a9533016.html>

Huda Jawad, co-founder of the Faith and Violence Against Women and Girls Coalition, said: "We call on faith leaders and representatives to continue to condemn domestic abuse and harmful practices that have no place in religion, and undertake training to spot the signs of abuse and better support survivors in their communities."

Nicole Jacobs, the government's domestic abuse commissioner, said: "We know that the problem of domestic abuse is widespread, affecting victims of every faith and BAME background. The Covid crisis has brought a whole new set of series and challenges. Different faith-based charities coming together for this campaign is welcome."

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

6) Webinars

DOMESTIC ABUSE WEBINAR
 INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
 04.06.20
 17:00-18:30
 REGISTER HERE: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-day-against-domestic-violence-2020-tickets-123456789012>

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:
 HARPAL CHATWAL
 AUTHOR & HEAD OF DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES AT A LEADING LAW FIRM
 VERONICA SIMPSON
 CEO, BAI IN DOMESTIC ABUSE
 POLLY HARRAR
 FOUNDER, THE PRAGA PROJECT
 RAHMANARA CHOWDHURY
 PSYCHOLOGIST & AUTHOR

DOMESTIC ABUSE WEBINAR (2)
 10.06.20
 17:00-18:00
 REGISTER HERE: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/domestic-abuse-webinar-2-tickets-123456789012>

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:
 NICOLE JACOBS
 GOVERNMENT DOMESTIC ABUSE COMMISSIONER
 NAOMI DICKSON
 FOUNDER, WOMEN'S AID
 LUTHA KHAN
 FOUNDER, WOMEN'S AID
 SIMON PHILLIPS
 DIRECTOR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

6) Webinars

DOMESTIC ABUSE WORKSHOP
 INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
 28.07.20
 17:00-18:30
 REGISTER HERE: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-day-against-domestic-violence-2020-tickets-123456789012>

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:
 IMAM FAROQ MULLA
 STANDING TOGETHER
 RABBI TANYA SAKHNOVICH
 WITH HADAR, JERAM, SYDNEY
 HUDA JAWAD
 STANDING TOGETHER
 JUDY BLOOMER
 FOUNDER, WOMEN'S AID

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

7) FAITHS AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK

Launched from 23-27 November during International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls (25th November) & UN 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (25th November – 10th December).

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

7) FAITHS AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK

- Our short campaign video.
- FADA campaign logos.
- FADA Awareness Week campaign poster.
- Two further FADA campaign posters for the following United Nations days of activism: 16 days of activism against gender-based violence (25th November – 10th December) and Elimination of violence against women day (25th November).
- Social media assets (17 Instagram graphics and 17 Twitter graphics, both with suggested captions in the corresponding excel docs).
- Two key social media assets translated into Arabic, Bulgarian, German, Punjabi, Spanish and Turkish.
- FADA support pack.

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

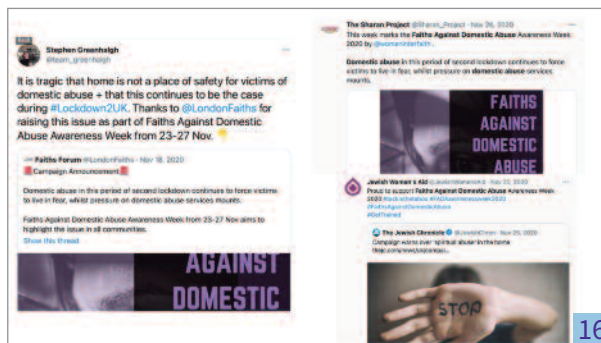
7) FAITHS AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK

Lead Partner Organisations:
Women's Interfaith Network, <https://winet.org.uk/>
Faiths Forum for London, <http://faithforum.org.uk/>

Supporting Partner Organisations:
Faiths United South Network, <https://www.faithsunitedsouth.org/>
Country Community Health and Wellbeing, <https://ccwhw.org.uk/>
Near Neighbours, <https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/>
London Jewish Representative Council, <http://www.londonjewishcommunity.com/>
Kingdom Liberal Synagogue, <https://liberal.org.uk/>
Buddhist Council of Britain, <https://www.buddhistcouncil.org.uk/>
Hindu Council of Britain, <https://www.hinducouncil.org.uk/>
The Muslim Project, <https://www.muslimproject.org.uk/>
Strengthening Faith Institutions, <https://www.sfi.org.uk/>
Respond, <https://respond.org.uk/>
Respond, <https://www.respond.org.uk/>
Creating Homes Shaping Places (CHSP), <https://www.chsp.org.uk/>
Jewish Women's Aid, <https://www.jwa.org.uk/>
The Faith & Belief Forum, <https://faithandbelief.org.uk/>
Near Neighbours West London, <https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs/west-london/>
Near Neighbours Birmingham, <https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs/birmingham/>

FADA

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ACTIVITY STAGE

8) DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING FOR FAITH LEADERS



FADA

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EVALUATION STAGE

18

EVALUATION STAGE

The first FADA Awareness Week 2020 received over a quarter of a million impressions on Twitter

- Over 18 different organisations partnered with us on the week
- Twitter response from the minister of faith
- Press coverage including an article in the Jewish Chronicle

FADA

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THE FUTURE

20

THE FUTURE

1) Webinar:

Title: How Can We Address Domestic Abuse Within Faith Communities? – Practical Steps
Date: 20th May 6-7PM

2) Domestic Abuse Awareness Training for Faith Leaders at Faith Institutions (targeted at grassroots Faith Leaders)

3) Faiths Against Domestic Abuse Awareness Week 2021

FADA

Register your interest:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1PApQLSekG91YprzWRDRo7c1Mhah1xwKqj6pDKq73cngH4CufUFv3Tw/viewform?usp=pp_url

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Project : Time For You



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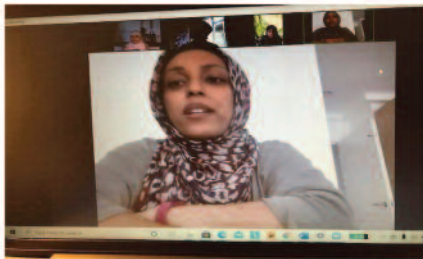
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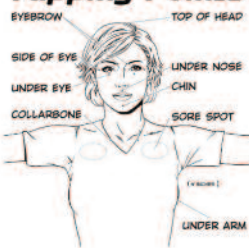
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Gratitude Journal



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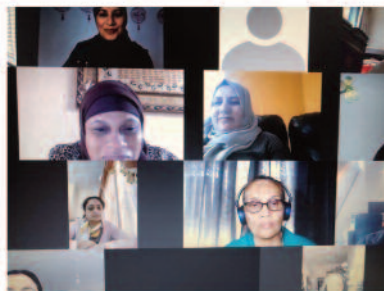
Tapping Points



7



8



9

Afternoon Workshop C: Financial impacts on places of worship and faith-based charities

Facilitator: Mr Moin Azmi, Vice-Chair,
Mosques and Imams National Advisory
Board (MINAB)

Presenters: Mr Oliver Chan, Research
Team, National Council for Voluntary
Organisations and Mr Ian Hardie, Treasurer,
United Reformed Church in the UK

Rapporteur: Steve Miller, Convenor,
London Borough Faiths Network

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Mr Moin Azmi welcomed participants to the
discussion group.

Mr Oliver Chan (NCVO) offered his
presentation. A copy of his PowerPoint
slides is at the end of this note and a
summary of his points is below:

- The Respond, Recover Reset (RRR) research that NCVO is undertaking looks at the impact of the current situation on the charity sector.
- The research is taking place over an 18 month period in collaboration with Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University. It focuses on charities, community groups and small and medium social enterprises.
- The RRR research consists of a monthly survey launched in September and regular in depth interviews with organisational staff and volunteers, monthly reports and a panel survey.
- There have been over 3,000 responses since September. Respondents are disproportionately from larger charities, although 70% work on a local level. 2% classified themselves as religion or faith based covering both congregation and faith based charities.
- Monthly surveys show that respondents reported that their financial situation has worsened over time. In September last year 39% said finances had improved but by February this was 18%. The percentage of those who said that their situation had deteriorated rose from 20% in September to 40% in January this year.
- The situation appears to be getting marginally better in February where those who reported that their financial position had deteriorated fell to 33%, indicating a turn may be occurring as the country is preparing to move out of lock down.
- Problems are caused by the lack of an ability to raise revenue, such as through hiring out premises or from donations, when set against increasing demand for services, leading to charities using their reserves.
- Service provision has also changed, with a majority of charities offering fewer services compared with the previous March (although a minority were offering more).
- Some services have had to stop where in-person meeting was not possible and there was no digital alternative. Even so, over 60% of charities have moved some of their work on line, which favours some forms of activity.
- The workforce has changed over time, such as where people are situated, the rise of those working remotely and a reduction of those working in their normal workplace. Some charities are using the furlough scheme.
- Contrary to the news headlines, the number of people formally volunteering has decreased, as has, the time given to volunteering. The disjuncture is because informal volunteering has gone up during the pandemic.
- The research shows that there has been increased uncertainty amongst charities and some are asking how they are going to survive.

- There are beginning to be signs of hope. Fewer charities believe that they will close by this time next year and in terms of long term planning few see the pandemic as having a serious impact on their plans.
- In the immediate future there is the issue of opening up services and moving back to previous patterns of operating as this involves a lot of risk assessment.
- It is worth asking the questions: Which services will return, which will stay online and what is the balance?
- There is concern about the financial future, both in terms of those who could not access the furlough scheme and of the impact of the economy as a whole and charities' ability to raise funds
- How many faith based organisations have responded to the survey?
There had been in the region 3,000 respondents across the life of the project and 1% – 2% of respondents had been from religious congregations or faith based charities.
- How has NCVO reached out to faith based organisations?
It has used a number of ways, including stakeholder engagement and social media. NCVO is doing more work on this important issue as the NCVO Almanac notes that about 9% of the sector is faith based but only 1% of the sector have responded to the current research.

Mr Ian Hardie offered his presentation. A summary of his points is below.

- Volunteering is likely to increase but this will take time and there is a question about how charities keep those engaged who have started volunteering during the pandemic.
- Similarly, there is a question about how charities reengage volunteers who were not able to volunteer during the pandemic.
- Further detail about the research can be found on the NCVO website. Workshop participants are encouraged to take part in the surveys and look at NCVO's resources.
- The United Reformed Church (URC) exists across Scotland, England and Wales. It has in the region of 1400 congregations, all of which are individual charities.
- The buildings come under separate charitable trusts but ministers are paid centrally, so the arrangement appears complex. The distribution of ministry and the cost of ministry are not aligned.
- The impact of Covid-19 on the finances of local congregations is severe.
- An early decision was made to stop meetings, unless absolutely necessary, to ensure the health and wellbeing of members. Some congregations are not functioning at all as physical worshipping communities. The consequence of this is that financial offerings people bring through the door have dried up.

Mr Azmi thanked Mr Chan for his presentation and invited questions. Responses from Mr Chan are in italics.

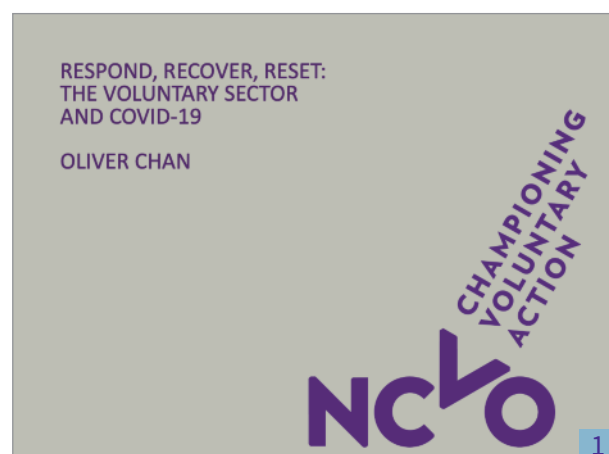
- How have places of worship coped, given they have overheads but not necessarily had an income in this period?
There is a category of 'religion and faith based' in the survey. Some individual congregations have responded but the sample size is too small to make any definitive statement. Nevertheless, their issues were similar to other charities and there was, as noted, an impact of having fewer donations, similarly if a place of worship hires out its premises then it would also have taken a financial hit.
- Even where services have occurred during easing of lockdown many of the elderly and vulnerable have not been able to attend, so the financial situation has not greatly improved for those congregations.
- The URC made a decision to lockdown earlier than did the Government, as it felt the Government was too slow. Therefore, revenue from room hire simply stopped from an early point.

- Some churches also have employees, other than the minister. Some have had to look at the furlough scheme and were successful in using that. However, even these congregations have lost money as they pay salaries at 100%
- There are savings but these do not make up for loss of income. A few churches have been able to apply for business-interruption insurance during Covid, but this is rare.
- Local churches that have emphasised in-person giving have suffered a greater negative financial impact in comparison to those that have encouraged 'digital/electronic' giving. Those congregations that historically had moved to standing orders and direct debits have fared much better than those who said they would find other ways to raise funds.
- There is also the issue of those who can and those who cannot access electronic banking. This is often a class issue and also an age issue.
- Congregations that have over-relied on the hire of premises for income and not built up a culture of giving from members have suffered the most.
- Those who have successfully moved on-line in terms of services and other activities have maintained their income better than those that have not.
- One church realised 25% of its members had no digital access, either a device or internet. It applied for financial assistance and bought all those members a tablet, paid for internet access and offered training. This investment has paid dividends as they recouped the monies spent and have the feeling that they have done well in the pandemic context keeping all their congregation connected.
- The national church has lost about 5% of its income from local churches. However, because of reduced costs the denomination has ended up having

surplus funds. That is not the case for local congregations

Mr Azmi thanked Mr Hardie and commented on the severe impact that the pandemic had had on charities, notwithstanding the furlough scheme. He spoke about business interruption cover as something that needed to be explored further. He invited comments and questions. The following points were made in discussion:

- The charity sector has always been predominantly volunteer led. This is a strength but there also needs to be a level of professionalism and this can be a challenge.
- There needs to be an awareness of how charities and other voluntary bodies can diversify their funding streams to ensure they are sustainable.
- The Government seems to have given local authorities money to support the work of faith communities and multi faith groups but there is no way of seeing where that money is being used. It will be important to find out how this has worked to better prepare for the future.
- There is a need to ensure faith-based bodies are engaging with the wider sector. Where there are opportunities for engagement, such as the NCVO research, they should be taken.



RESPOND, RECOVER, RESET: THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND COVID-19

- Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University and NCVO
- Funded by ESRC: July 2020 to Dec 2021
- Monthly barometer survey, 300 interviews & a panel survey
- Response rates: 3,020 responses across five waves

Wave	No. survey responses
1	697
2	699
3	384
4	710
5	500

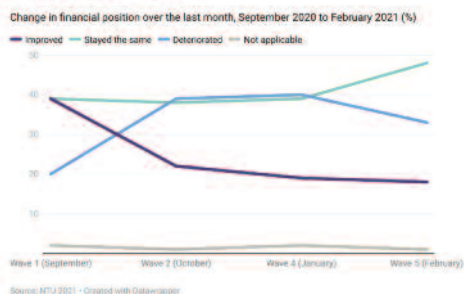
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WHO ARE OUR RESPONDENTS? OPERATIONS, SUBSECTOR, SERVICES

- Subsector: '2% were 'religion, faith-based'
- Identity (self-declared)
 - 12% BAME, 14% deaf and disabled, 7% LGBTI+, 9% women's organisations
 - 26% social enterprise

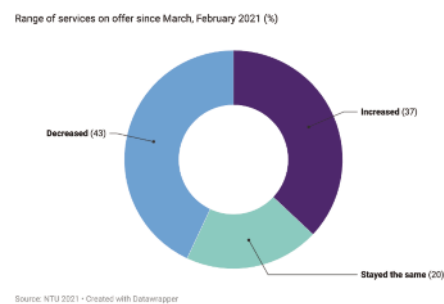
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WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL SITUATION? OVER THE LAST MONTH



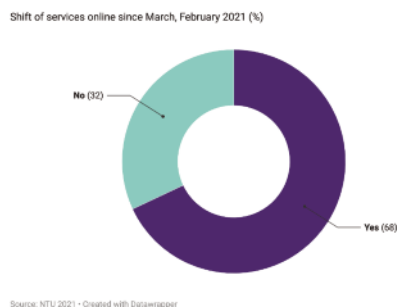
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HOW HAVE SERVICES CHANGED RANGE OF SERVICES ON OFFER



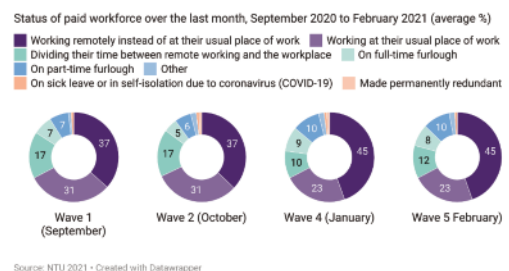
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HOW HAVE SERVICES CHANGED SHIFT OF SERVICES ONLINE



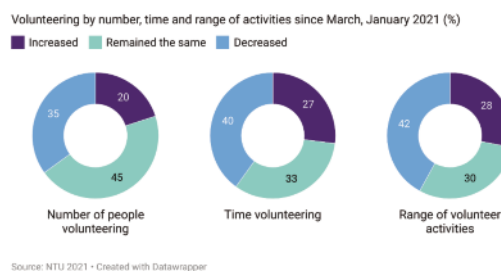
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WORKFORCE CHANGES HOW PEOPLE ARE WORKING OVER TIME



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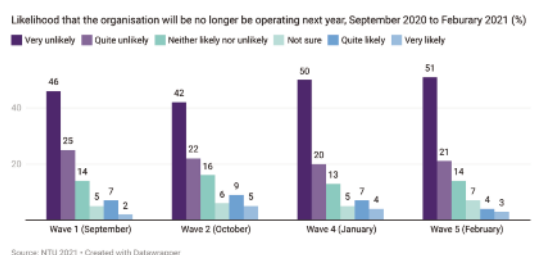
VOLUNTEERING DURING THE PANDEMIC



8

WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM OUTLOOK FOR CHARITIES?

CLOSURE



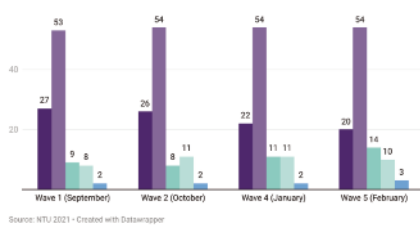
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WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM OUTLOOK FOR CHARITIES?

LONG-TERM PLANNING

Delivering objectives next year, September 2020 to February 2021 (%)

Significant negative impact Moderate negative impact No impact Moderate positive impact Significant positive impact



Source: NTU 2021 - Created with Datawrapper

10

CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Roadmap out of lockdown
- Financial outlook for charities
- The future of volunteering

11

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Respond, recover, reset website:

- <http://cpwop.org.uk/what-we-do/projects-and-publications/covid-19-vcse-organisation-responses/>
- Next survey open 12th April
- Wave 6 report with theme on local government out on 19 April

Other resources:

- <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/coronavirus/delivering-your-work/delivering-activities-and-services>
- <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/coronavirus/volunteers>
- <https://publications.ncvo.org.uk/time-well-spent-diversity->

12

EXTRA SLIDES NOT FOR PRESENTING BUT FOR DISCUSSION WHERE NEEDED

NCVO 13

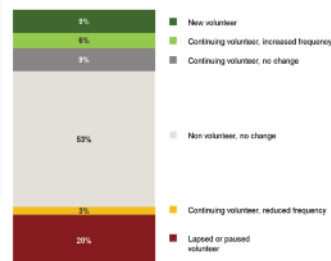
But the headlines mask the complexity...

Volunteering	March – July 2020	2019/20
Formal	27%	37%
Informal	57%	53%

Source: Community Life Survey/Community Life Re-contact survey.

NCVO 14

How has the pandemic changed who volunteers?



NCVO 15

WHO ARE OUR RESPONDENTS? SIZE (INCOME)

NTU survey respondents by income compared to Almanac 2020 estimates, January 2021 (%)

Less than £10,000 £10,000 to £100,000 £100,000 to £1m £1m to £10m £10m to £100m More than £100m



Source: NTU 2021, NCVO 2020 - Created with Datawrapper

16

WHO ARE OUR RESPONDENTS? GEOGRAPHY

NTU survey respondents by UK region/ nation compared with Almanac 2020, January 2021 (%)

NTU Almanac



Source: NTU 2021, NCVO 2020 - Created with Datawrapper

17

Afternoon Workshop D: Digital communication – from dialogue to social media and Inter Faith Week

Facilitator: Minister David Bruton,
Spiritualists' National Union and IFN FCF
Vice-Moderator

Presenters: Philip Ybring, Communications
Manager, Faith and Belief Forum; and
Yogesh Joshi and Chanda Shome, Watford
Inter Faith Association

Rapporteur: Chelsea Craven, IFN Volunteer

.....

Minister David Bruton welcomed
participants to the discussion group, and
asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Mr Philip Ybring offered his presentation. A
copy of his presentation slides is at the end
of this note and a summary of his points is
below:

- I am the Communications Manager at the Faith and Belief Forum (FBF). FBF is mainly a UK body, although it has some overseas projects. It works in schools, universities and communities.
- FBF's work is based on face-to-face dialogue – so a key question for us was “How could we continue to do meaningful work during the COVID-19 pandemic?”
- In response to this, we overhauled our IT internally, externally and programmatically.
- Internally, we needed to enable our teams to work together and collaborate remotely. As part of this, we have used MS Teams, as well as Zoom and file sharing systems.
- We also believe it is essential that the external reflects the internal – so we wanted to get our internal systems working well, and then to model that externally.
- Programmatically, we moved our activity into online spaces. Initially, we focused mainly on digital communications. When it became clear that the pandemic and lockdown were going to last longer than initially hoped, we began to think about how our schools, university and community programmes might work online. We are now running our inter faith programmes in the digital space. Much of our activity could work online with only minimal changes. For example, sessions often had to be shorter when held on Zoom, and the facilitation needed to be tighter. Working online was harder for group facilitators, as it was more challenging to ‘read the room’.
- We have also had to change the way we do presentations, with more people creating videos and other content in advance to share, for example.
- We have found some benefits to carrying out our activities online. For example, more people were getting involved, perhaps because it was now a shorter time commitment to do so, and a lower cost – because our online meetings are usually shorter than in-person ones, and don't include any travel time. There are no travel or venue costs. We can also reach a wider audience, because we are less geographically constrained – we no longer attract only people who live within a realistic travel distance, but can reach people anywhere. We were also able to bring more people to our last awards event than usual, as there were no venue capacity issues to keep an eye on!
- We created a new digital strategy in April-May, focused on content production, such as podcasts, blogs, videos and graphics. We are also keen to showcase the work of others in the inter faith and faith-based space. It is really important to

show this work to the world, particularly in the context of lockdown.

- During Inter Faith Week, for example, we did a podcast and video series across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Minister Bruton thanked Mr Ybring for his presentation and invited questions or comments. Responses from Mr Ybring are in italics.

- Lots of groups don't have the skills in-house to make the switch to digital – how did that work for FBF?

We already had the capacity in-house with me as the Comms Manager and also a consultant working on digital. There is training available for organisations that have some funding – for example for staff. We will also hire in help for things like creating video content, because it is very specialised as a skill.

- Within my community, many people are very reticent about getting online and trying things like Zoom. How do we deal with that?

A key step would be to identify why people are reticent: is it a fear of looking silly? Does it all seem too mysterious? You can then look at appropriate options, such as training courses or 1:1 support. There are also lots of online tutorials, and a lot of apps that can do a lot of the work for you. For example, Canva has many free templates, so you can create something that almost looks like a graphic designer did it but without much prior skill. Anyone with a smart phone can create a basic video clip of themselves.

Mr Yogesh Joshi and Ms Chanda Shome then offered their presentation. A copy of their PowerPoint slides is at the end of this note and a summary of their points is below:

- Watford Inter Faith Association (WIFA) is 43 years old this year. Until 2020, WIFA carried out its activities 'in the real world', and kept in touch with people by email and phone.

- 2020 brought a lot of change, and we had to adapt. WIFA's last in-person event was its Annual Lecture, which took place in February 2020.

- One of the first things we set up after lockdown was announced was a weekly prayer and discussion meeting via Zoom. We prayed for people affected by COVID-19, including those in hospital and dying.

- After a while, we began to add discussion meetings based on topics, featuring time for Q&A. These were held fortnightly.

- People often have some misconceptions about faiths, and some of these have been tackled through the discussion meetings.

- There have also been faith-based meetings that were open to members from other faiths.

- WIFA is also part of Watford Celebration, which takes place during the early May bank holiday every year. It is a celebration of the multi-cultural town of Watford. WIFA's offer at this was a 'Sacred Space', which brought people of different faiths together to discuss 'How can our faith and thinking get us through difficult situations?' It is usually a 1-day event, but this year it was split across the bank holiday weekend. It was also live-streamed on Facebook.

- WIFA also has a small plot of land within a park in Watford, which is designated to be a peace garden. Some members went during lockdown in small numbers to keep the garden in good order.

- In November, we celebrated 'Digital Diwali'.

- We also took part in Remembrance Day – usually a very big event in Watford, but this time there were only a small number of faith representatives because of the need to ensure social distancing.

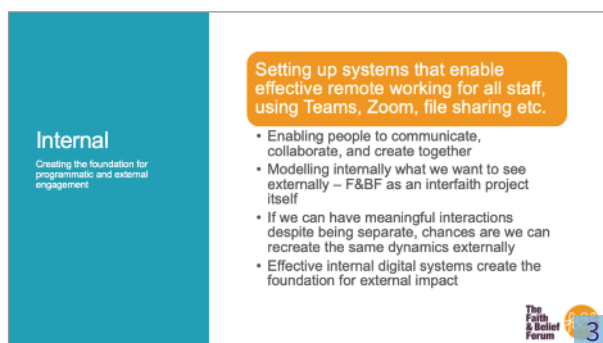
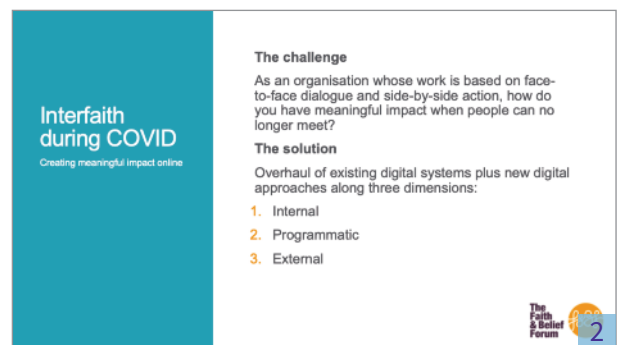
- Each year, we usually hold a pilgrimage during Inter Faith Week. This usually begins at the Synagogue with Mitzvah

Day treats. This year, the Week was during the second lockdown, so we organised a virtual pilgrimage! This included visits to some places of worship that wouldn't usually be visited on the walking pilgrimage because they are too far away, and its important to keep the walking route short so that it is as accessible as possible. It meant that places such as St Alban's Abbey, Bhaktivedanta Manor and the Jain Temple in Bushey could be included, which are all further away from the centre of Watford. The WIFA member who ran the digital side was actually doing so from Brazil, where they had been on holiday when lockdown began!

- WIFA now has its own YouTube channel, and can also live-stream to this.
- WIFA also works closely with the Watford Faith Leaders' Forum, which made a statement about the vaccine being safe, which WIFA shared to its network.
- WIFA also worked with One Vision on joint social action projects.

Minister Bruton thanked Mr Joshi and Ms Shome for their presentation and invited questions or comments. Responses from Mr Joshi and Ms Shome are in italics.

- Do you have any advice for groups that are just setting out online?
We began with the weekly prayer meetings, which were internal. So all the teething problems happened at those. People eventually began to feel more confident with it, and willing to try more challenging approaches. The live streamed celebration was very daunting – but we wouldn't have got there if we hadn't started with smaller things.
- Are there costs involved? Our group has bought a basic Zoom license, but do things like live streaming to YouTube cost more?
YouTube is paid for by advertising, so it is free to use. If your YouTube videos are really, really popular, YouTube may even pay you! The ability to stream from Zoom to Facebook or YouTube is currently included within all paid Zoom licenses, but not the free version. One Vision was set up by a bigger organisation, so some of the infrastructure was theirs. Mr Ybring added that it was possible to get 50% off Zoom through the Charity Digital Exchange if you were a registered charity.
- It would be useful if there was a small guide or booklet with case studies that local groups could use.



Virtual Linking Year:

5

6

External
Staying visible and communicating our impact online

Focus on digital comms to show impact and engage with communities

- Created a new digital communications strategy for the new context
- Putting additional resources towards content production: Podcasts, blogs, videos, graphics, etc.
- Engaging with communities and highlighting the work they're doing supporting and connecting people through the pandemic
- Creating content from our programmes to showcase the impact we're continuing to have
- Digital media campaigns like Faith, Fitness and Feeling good and videos for Inter Faith Week.

The Faith & Belief Forum

7

The Faith & Belief Forum Podcast

Podcast: The Skipping Sikh - Rajinder Singh and Min Kaur
18/06/20

The Faith & Belief Forum Podcast

Podcast: Faith during the pandemic - Simon & Keely Bateson from Riverside Vineyard Church
14/05/20

The Faith & Belief Forum Podcast

Podcast: Rabbi Mark Goldsmith: Passover and Coronavirus
09/04/20

The Faith & Belief Forum

8

Virtual Linking Year:

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Thank you

QUESTIONS?

The Faith & Belief Forum

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WIFA – Interfaith Network Workshop 23 March 2021



*Living our Faith,
Loving our Neighbour*

1

Digital Communication From Dialogue to Social Media And Interfaith Week

Yogesh Joshi & Chanda Shome

2

WIFA's Activities and Projects 2020 – 2021

• *Harold Meyer Memorial Lecture: 'Integration and Community Cohesion'*

• *Regular Tuesday interfaith prayer and discussions - online*

• *Sacred Space at the Watford Celebration - online*

• *WIFA's project: the Watford Peace Garden*

• *Remembrance Day*

• *Interfaith Pilgrimage - online*

• *WIFA started a YouTube channel*

• *WIFA in partnership with the
'Watford Faith Leaders Forum' and 'One Vision'*

3

Harold Meyer Memorial Lecture 'Integration and Community Cohesion'

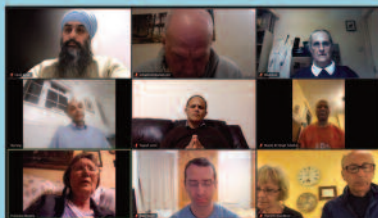
Guest Speaker:
Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP



Watford Grammar School for Boys – Saturday 22 February 2020.

4

Tuesday Prayer and Discussion Group



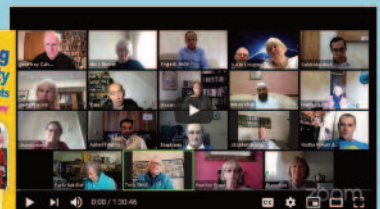
Facilitated by **Owring Moshtael**, the Tuesday meetings started with prayers for those who were suffering as a result of the Covid pandemic. It then included interfaith discussions on chosen topics and presently going through to bust the myths that have arisen around individual faiths.



5

Sacred Space at Watford Celebration

Bank Holiday Weekend
August 30



Topic of discussion:

'How can our faith and thinking get us through difficult situations?'

Facilitated by **Yogesh Joshi** with speakers from 8 different faiths.

6

Watford Peace Garden

A project of the Watford Interfaith Association facilitated by **Jeff Bateman**.



Dean Russell MP with volunteers at the Peace Garden

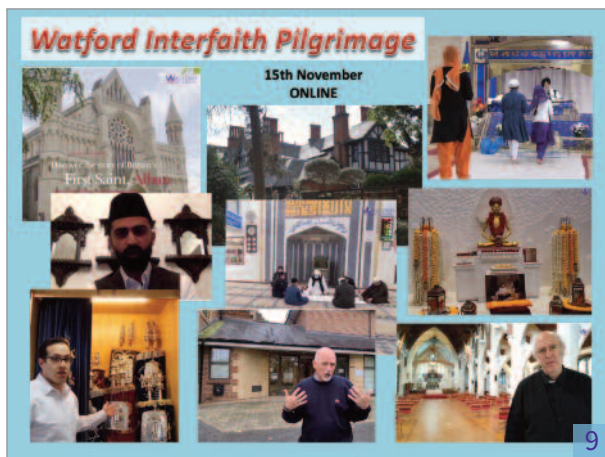
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Remembrance Day



WIFA laid a wreath of remembrance before the Peace Memorial by the Town Hall on Sunday 11th November.

8



Afternoon Workshop E: Inter faith solidarity and shared messaging in challenging times

Facilitator: Dr Ed Kessler MBE, Director,
Woolf Institute

Presenters: Neil Pitchford, Druid Network
and IFN FCF Vice-Moderator and Dr Harriet
Crabtree OBE, Executive Director, Inter
Faith Network

Rapporteur: Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra,
Muslim Council of Britain

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Dr Ed Kessler welcomed participants. He offered some brief opening reflections about the challenges for inter faith organisations at all levels of putting across messages that are inclusive and which actually say something. He noted that due to a recording commitment he would need to leave slightly before the end of the meeting; Dr Crabtree would take over from him at that point. He then invited participants to introduce themselves.

Mr Neil Pitchford offered the following reflections on inter faith statement making and messaging:

- He is a Trustee of the Druid Network. He is also one of the 'statement making' Moderators of the FCF. In both contexts he has experiences of making statements. He has in fact been involved with statement making since the mid-80s when he became the trades union convenor for a local authority. In that latter role he received helpful training through the Trades Union Congress and from that he learned some foundational principles:
 - i. Whenever making a statement you need to get the facts right. Get the facts of the issue before you even set pen to paper.

- ii. Take care about the emotion that is being conveyed or may be aroused. Be as neutral as possible, be level and be consistent. Avoid stimulating an emotional response. Avoid 'flame wars'.

- iii. If the statement relates to competing points of view treat them in a balanced way with relevant information from both sides.

- iv. Take care with tone. Be concise and clear. Try and pre-empt misunderstanding and over emotional response by adding additional explanations where necessary.

- Social media is unforgiving. If you post something in the heat of emotion it may follow you around for years.

Dr Kessler thanked Mr Pitchford for his reflections and invited questions and comments. Responses from Mr Pitchford are in italics.

- How do we decide when to say something and when not? As faith communities we wish to stand up for each other in solidarity. But potentially we could stand with one faith community but then be in a position where we are unable to stand with another and our response could then be seen as lacking parity.
Any intervention should be subject to the other party's need. They should make a judgement call on when is an appropriate time to make a statement. This should be a cooperative endeavour.
- How do we cope with the way in which people try to discredit facts with fake news, conspiracy theories and deliberate disinformation?
Always add a link in the statement to the source of the facts so readers can check that.

- Behind any announcement there needs to be clarity about the purpose of the statement or message.
Some of the vaccine videos we've seen just say "I have had the vaccine" and do not give any context or address concerns. That could trigger the wrong response.
- Campaign groups have the reverse strategy – arouse outrage, get people to sign a petition and identify themselves with the cause and then not back down.
Campaign literature is like an opinion piece. That's different from a factual statement. It is legitimate but a quite different strategy.
- There are times when commenting from a faith perspective you do want to take sides. So how does one decide how to pitch a disagreement?
Dr Kessler thanked Mr Pitchford and invited Dr Crabtree to offer some reflections and, in doing so, to pick up the two questions/points about videos and taking sides.
- In coalition contexts or membership organisations, it is not wise to make statements where the parties involved don't agree that it's necessary, or to go beyond where people are prepared to go as individual organisations. The consensus principle is of great importance. You could damage your coalition or lose your membership otherwise.
- Local groups' representatives sometimes talk about this challenge. Within their group some may feel passionate about an issue, for example linked to an event in another country with which their group has strong ties. But it may not be something where the group overall feels it appropriate to issue a statement. Consensus is very important in such matters.
- In thinking about any statement it is also important to consider who will read it, where will it be read, and how it might be read.

A summary of **Dr Harriet Crabtree's** points is below:

- There are some basic questions to be asked before embarking on a statement. For example: Why a statement? Is one really needed? Who wants it and for what purpose?
- In inter faith contexts statements are often quite general. There are times, however, when they address or refer to something specific. It is then important to, for example, get the name of a place of worship right or to refer correctly to the relevant legislation or guidance.
- For solidarity and inter faith harmony and working together, be sure:
 - Why you are saying it
 - You are saying it in ways that command agreement
 - You are saying it in ways that enable people to move forward together
- Be aware of setting precedents. IFN has a policy on making statements – which is perhaps almost a statement on not making statements. For example it makes clear that IFN does not make statements on overseas events per se, but only where there is actual or likely impact on inter faith relations in the UK. That reflects the wishes of members. IFN's statements focus particularly on inter faith issues and inter faith relations. It is not able to make statements on all the social issues of concern to members. The policy can be seen at https://www.interfaith.org.uk/uploads/Policy_on_making_of_statements.pdf.
- The vaccination videos mentioned by a participant earlier reflect a desire on the part of people to get a message across at a difficult and worrying time. But it is indeed difficult if no explanation is given and concerns are not addressed.
- Statements are very difficult to draft by committee. You nearly always have to have one, or possibly two, trusted

drafters who then circulate a draft for comment and any necessary revision. An agreed protocol or process is important. This is vital for a sense of genuine ownership.

- Statements are in some respect not unlike music. It is helpful to read the draft aloud. Rhetoric (in the correct sense of the word) matters. Text should flow. If you stood and read it out it should sound right.
- There are different types of statement and they require different tones. For example, today's Co-Chairs and Moderators' statement before the moment of silence was very different in style from a longer statement about a topic such as hate crime.

Dr Kessler thanked Dr Crabtree for her reflections and invited questions and comments. In discussion the following points were made:

- This has been an incredibly useful session so far. In Scotland our most recent statement was one by religious leaders on the climate crisis. It took a lot of crafting.
<https://interfaithscotland.org/religious-leaders-call-for-immediate-climate-action>
- There is an element of communication that comes from a faith perspective which deals with emotional content, with things about which we feel deeply. The statement before the moment's silence today showed that kind of empathy about the pain people have experienced. Faith statements can engage with this and create an emotional common ground. They are not just about fact.
- Sometimes people become wedded to misinformation and plain facts are not enough to tackle that. We also have to engage at an emotional level.
- Journalists sometimes use statements as press releases and they want direct quotes. Consider including at least one

quote. Also add links to other statements you have made.

- Actions speak louder than words. It is really important to show how faith groups have been working with local authorities, Government and others. We are walking together to address the needs of humanity and we are learning and breaking down barriers. This is vital.
- Dr Kessler brought both speakers back to the point about 'taking sides' and asked them to comment.
- Mr Pitchford said that if you are going to have to make a statement from a particular perspective then it helps to explain why your faith leads you to say what you do. In other words, be clear about the basis for your view and why you might be opposed to a particular viewpoint. It helps people understand the context.
- Dr Crabtree commented that there are times when a 'side' is fairly clear, for example, if one is drafting a statement about hate crime after attacks on places of worship or on people of different faith backgrounds. In such cases there would be a side to be taken. Or if faith communities were writing about domestic abuse – they would not say it is a good thing.

At this point, Dr Kessler left the meeting. Dr Crabtree asked Mr Pitchford if, as an FCF Moderator, he would like to chair. He then oversaw the final discussion which agreed the points to be fed back to the plenary session and thanked all participants.

Faith communities and COVID-19: Learning from the journey

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

10.30am **Welcome from Co-Chairs and setting of scene**

MAIN MORNING SESSION

Chair: IFN Co-Chair Narendra Waghela

10.40am **Stepping up to serve: sharing stories of faith and inter faith responses to need**

Major Pam Knuckey, Assistant Director (Research), Research and Development, with Major David Evans, Territorial and Inter Faith Officer, the Salvation Army UK

The Salvation Army is known for its wide programme of response to social need, including emergency response. In the presentation, Pam and David talk about its response during the pandemic, including through its congregations and partnerships.

Gurdeep Kaur, Co-Founder, Sikh Foodbank and Dr Maureen Sier, Director, Interfaith Scotland and IFN Trustee

Like other nations of the UK, Scotland has seen a tremendous response from faith communities to need during the pandemic. Gurdeep will give an in depth insight into one of the important initiatives that has emerged to serve community need during COVID-19 and Maureen will be sharing the inspiring response from Scotland.

Hetvi Parekh, Sewa Day Team Leader Nottingham

The national charity Sewa Day has been responsible for a wide range of responses to food need during the pandemic. Hetvi leads their Nottingham team which has helped deliver 50 tons of food donations to foodbanks, charities and local schools in the last 12 months and will be giving an insight into their work which has involved volunteers of many backgrounds, including from local faith communities.

Q and A and sharing of experiences of faith-based voluntary response during the pandemic

11.20am **Faith communities and COVID-19**

A brief overview opening up the issues that are being explored during the day.

11.30am	A time of challenge A significant aspect for many communities has been the unequal impact of COVID-19 in terms of mortality and illness and the issue of vaccine hesitancy. Some reflections on this are offered by: Shermara Fletcher, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations, Churches Together in England Dr Arshad Latif, Covid-19 Response Group, British Islamic Medical Association
11.55am	Brief break
11.59am	Regathering and words from the Co-Chairs
12.00pm	A minute's silence to remember all those who have died with COVID-19 The meeting joins with those across the UK marking a minute's silence to remember all who have died with COVID-19. In the silence we shall also be holding in gratitude the work of all those who have been responding to its impacts on our lives.
12.05pm	Workshop Session 1 – pandemic response and learning for the future Each workshop will provide a chance for insights into faith and inter faith responses during the pandemic so far and also to consider what has been learnt – lessons for the future in terms of faith and inter faith engagement. The pandemic and: A. Places of worship, ritual life and celebrating festivals B. Funerals and bereavement C. Health care chaplaincy D. Vaccination and BAME health COVID-19 matters E. Capturing the faith response to the pandemic – surveys, research, blogs Each workshop will have a note taken of key points. Workshop rapporteurs are asked to feed back to the plenary in under 2 minutes: 1 key point about response and 1 future learning point.
12.55pm	Feedback from Workshops
1.05pm	Religious Education and COVID-19 response Paul Smalley of NASACRE, Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University and IFN Trustee talks about how RE in schools adapted to the online world of the pandemic and introduces a new IFN resource shortly to go live –

‘Learning About Inter Faith Activity in the UK: A secondary resource for pupils aged 11 to 14’ – which includes examples to help secondary school pupils learn about inter faith activity through the lens of inter faith response to COVID-19.

1.15pm **Close of morning session**

LUNCH *The Zoom link will be left open*

1.25pm to 1.45pm *For those who would like to chat over lunch with three other fellow delegates, it is planned that break outs of 20 minutes will be created based on advance sign up.*

MAIN AFTERNOON SESSION

Chair: IFN Co-Chair Bishop Jonathan Clark

2.00pm **Welcome back to plenary**

2.10pm **Partnership working during the pandemic – and beyond**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, partnership working involving statutory agencies and faith communities has been of great importance on many different fronts including messaging about vaccines; developing guidance; legal measures; and bringing emergency responders together to discuss and plan. In this session there is a chance to hear from three different perspectives about the importance of this kind of engagement and of partnership working beyond the pandemic.

Daniel Singleton, Director, FaithAction

Daniel talks about FaithAction’s work in England to support actions by the UK Government on places of worship during the pandemic and faith communities during COVID-19; and the importance of faith groups and local authorities working in partnership. He will also be highlighting the present and future possibilities of the ‘Faith Covenant’ developed by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society for which FaithAction provides the Secretariat.

Response from Esmond Rosen, President, Barnet Multi Faith Forum and IFN Trustee from the perspective of a local inter faith organisation which has been working closely with its local authority throughout the pandemic – reflecting its ongoing approach to partnership work with statutory agencies.

Kate McColgan, Chair, Inter Faith Council for Wales and IFN Trustee

Kate reflects on the experience in Wales of the Inter Faith Council for Wales and the Faith Communities Forum of the Welsh Government of mutually supportive work with the Welsh Government to tackle the pandemic.

Q and A and discussion

2.40pm	Workshop Session 2 – pandemic response and learning for the future Each workshop will provide a chance for insights into faith and inter faith responses during the pandemic so far and also to consider what has been learnt – lessons for the future in terms of faith and inter faith engagement. A. Faith groups and leaders working with local authorities B. Wellbeing and safety, from loneliness to domestic abuse: responding on an inter faith basis C. Financial impacts on places of worship and faith based charities D. Digital communication – from dialogue to social media and Inter Faith Week E. Inter faith solidarity and shared messaging in challenging times
3.30pm	Feedback from workshops
3.40pm	Plenary discussion
3.50pm	COVID-19 and inter faith engagement moving forward Brief reflections on the road ahead from: Ed Petersen, Chair, Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum and IFN Trustee Eda Molla Chousein, Youth Programme Coordinator of the National Interfaith Youth Network, Religions for Peace UK Dr Avtar Singh Matharu, Chair, York Interfaith Malcolm Deboo, Co-Moderator of IFN Faith Communities Forum
4.10pm	Closing reflections from the Co-Chairs
4.15pm	Close

Note: IFN links a wide range of organisations and its membership encapsulates a wide diversity of background and belief as well as experience and expertise. That can never be fully reflected in the pattern of presenters in one meeting. The pattern of speakers varies from meeting to meeting so that the benefit of this for learning and good practice can be gained.

Participating organisations

One or more representatives from the following organisations were present at the meeting:

Member bodies

All Faiths Network UK
Altrincham Interfaith Group
Baha'i Community of the UK
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
Barnet Multi Faith Forum
Bedford Council of Faiths
Board of Deputies of British Jews
Bolton Interfaith Council
Bournemouth & Poole Faith Links
Buddhist Society
Cambridge Inter-Faith Group
Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action
Cheltenham InterFaith
Christians Aware Faith Awareness
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Churches Together in England
Crawley Inter Faith Network
Devon Faith and Belief Forum
Druid Network
Faith & Belief Forum
Faith Network for Manchester
Faiths Forum for London
Harrow Interfaith
Hertsmere Forum of Faiths
Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
Hindu Council UK
Hindu Forum of Britain
Hounslow Friends of Faith
Institute Of Jainology
Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of GB
Interfaith Council for Wales
Interfaith Forum for Leicestershire
Interfaith MK
Interfaith Scotland
International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
Jain Network
Keighley Interfaith Group
Leeds Faiths Forum
London Boroughs Faiths Network
Methodist Church in Britain
Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby
Muslim Council of Britain
National Association of SACREs
Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
North East Regional Faiths Network
North Herts Interfaith Forum
North Kent Council for Inter Faith Relations
North Kirklees Inter Faith
Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
Norwich Interfaith link
Nottingham InterFaith Council
Office of Public Affairs of the UK Baha'i Community
OneSpirit Interfaith Foundation
Pagan Federation
Quakers in Britain
Religions for Peace UK
Salvation Army
South London Interfaith Group
South Shropshire Interfaith Forum
Spiritualists' National Union
Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB
United Reformed Church
Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK
Watford Inter Faith Association
Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group
Women's Interfaith Network
Woolf Institute
World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
World Congress of Faiths
York Interfaith Group
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Other organisations

British Islamic Medical Association
Cabinet Office
FaithAction
Gardens of Peace Muslim Cemetery
Greater Together Manchester
Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government
National Council for Voluntary
Organisations
Near Neighbours
Network for Pastoral, Spiritual and
Religious Care in Health
New Vision for Women
Rochdale Council
Sewa Day
Sikh Foodbank
Strengthening Faith Institutions

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 2020–21

Faith Community Representative Bodies

Baha'i Community of the UK
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
Board of Deputies of British Jews
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

The ASHA Foundation
Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme
City, University of London Chaplaincy
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

Abrahamic Reunion (England)
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
Faith and Belief Forum
Hindu Christian Forum
Interfaith Alliance UK
International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
International Interfaith Centre
Khalili Foundation

London Boroughs Faiths Network
 London Inter Faith Centre
 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
 Westminster Interfaith
 Women's Interfaith Network
 World Congress of Faiths

Local Inter Faith Groups

Altrincham Inter Faith Group
 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 Rother 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
 Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester
 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
 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
 Plymouth Council of Faiths
 Preston Faith Forum
 Redbridge Faith Forum
 Rochdale Multi Faith Partnership
 Rugby Inter Faith Forum
 Salford Interfaith Network
 Sheffield Inter Faith
 Slough Faith Partnership
 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 Faith and Belief 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 after September 2020 AGM

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Ministry of Housing,
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RESILIENCE/CONNECTION/COVID-19/ACTION/COOPERATION/
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BUILDING BACK/WEELLBEING/CONSULTATION/FAITH/ACTION/
MESSAGING/COOPERATION/CONNECTION/HOPE/KINDNESS