



Inter Faith Network for the UK day event for local inter faith practitioners

A SHORT REPORT

Tuesday 17 October 2017

Methodist Central Buildings, Manchester



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About the day



Rupa Shah Flynn and the Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi, Faith Network for Manchester

On 17 October 2017 practitioners from a wide range of local inter faith groups from different parts of the UK came together in Manchester for a day of learning and sharing held by the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN). This followed on from similar events held in Sheffield, London, Coventry and Bristol across the previous two years.

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

IFN has, since it was established in 1987, advocated strongly for the importance of

local inter faith activity. This has been an important part of its overall pattern of work. Local activity is organically related to the work of national faith community bodies and also benefits from the work of national and regional inter faith and educational initiatives of many kinds. Past IFN National Meetings have explored these links and the importance of the role of national faith communities and inter faith initiatives in supporting and encouraging local inter faith activity.

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



Jatinder Singh Birdi, IFN Co-Chair and Warwick and District Faiths Forum

The event was chaired by Jatinder Singh Birdi, an IFN Co-Chair and also Chair of Warwick District Faiths Forum. He welcomed participants on behalf of IFN. As a Chair of a local inter faith organisation he knew that such days were very important.

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

Mr Birdi said that in previous years the first thought that sprang to mind when thinking of Manchester was football. Following the terrorist attack on 22 May, his first thoughts – no doubt like those of many – were now for the victims of that tragedy. Such attacks were happening across the UK and across the world. People of faith had come together showing solidarity. The work of inter faith groups was very important and all involved should be commended.

It was good to have a wide range of groups represented at the event. Warwick District Faiths Forum had been in existence for 11 years. It had representation from different faith groups and also from statutory and voluntary agencies. It was important for faith communities to work with the statutory and voluntary sector, because

everyone was working for the same community. When they worked together, it was possible to be much more active and responsive and outcomes were much better.

Participants were then given a welcome to Manchester by the Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi on behalf of the Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M).

He went on to explain that FN4M had been formed in 2004 and it was part of the fabric of Manchester. It convened the Greater Manchester Interfaith Network, which brought together the other nine inter faith bodies in the boroughs in the Greater Manchester area. There were also a number of bilateral inter faith groups in the Manchester area, such as the local Council of Christians and Jews and Hindu Muslim and Christian Jewish forums. At least once a year during Inter Faith Week Greater Manchester Interfaith Network brought everyone together for a conference.

FN4M was pleased to be part of the working group for the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, which was part of the devolution to Manchester. This involved faith communities in working with the healthcare sector and was starting with an audit of services provided by faith groups in the area. FN4M was also hoping to work with the elected Mayor's office to lead on how the Mayor worked with inter faith groups across Greater Manchester.

It was very good to be meeting in Methodist Central Buildings for the IFN meeting. 12 congregations met there every Sunday, which constituted 1,800 people. It had 10 meeting rooms, 2 cafes and 5 social action projects.

FN4M was very pleased to welcome everyone and also to play a very active part in the day's event.

Morning session

Responding to terrorism, extremism and hatred

Rabbi Warren Elf, Community Development Worker, Faith Network for Manchester

Rabbi Elf made the following points

- He was the Treasurer for FN4M for 12 years and then became a part time worker as the Community Development Worker.
- The day after his daughter's wedding in London, he was driving back to Manchester. It was 5 days after the terrorist attack in Westminster. He was asked if it would be possible to organise a solidarity gathering on a bridge in

Manchester to coincide with the timing, one week on, of a similar solidarity gathering in London. He was asked late afternoon on the Monday to arrange the gathering for the Wednesday. FN4M had good links across the city and a wide mailing list. To his amazement, over 150 people appeared on the bridge at Salford Quays to stand in solidarity with victims of the Westminster terror attack. There were so many people they were able to link arms across the bridge from one end to the other. That showed both the need for such a gathering and also the willingness of people, primarily of faith communities, to come together. It was a very moving response. About a third of those present were from the Ahmadiyya community.



The Revd Richard Tetlow, Moseley Inter Faith Forum; Mufti Helal Mahmood, Oldham Interfaith Forum; and Ismail Hasham, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Lancashire Forum of Faiths

- The location of the post Westminster attack solidarity gathering was very near Media City so Granada and BBC NW crews came to interview a few people. This raised the profile of FN4M and a few other local inter faith organisations. In a way that meant FN4M was an automatic point of call when the attack took place in Manchester a few weeks later.
- The initial calls after the Manchester attack were of course for emergency first aiders, police and so forth. This included hospital chaplains and faith leaders in the immediate vicinity of the Manchester Arena. By the morning it was clear that a response was needed. Manchester Cathedral began working on a faith ceremony and contacted FN4M about people to be involved. 4 people from FN4M of different faiths were present. It was not possible for the ceremony to be in the Cathedral as that was within the exclusion zone so it took place outside it on the corner of Deansgate, opposite the Marks and Spencer building. That was where the IRA bomb had gone off 21 years earlier.
- There was a strong faith presence at the Vigil in Albert Square later that night. 23 May was a very warm day and lots of bottles of water were provided. Members of the Sikh community should be thanked for the refreshments they provided. Also the Lubavitch Jews.
- Across the following month there were a variety of events, in particular, since Muslims were observing Ramadan, lots of iftar meals at the end of each day's fasting. Such local faith events that had been planned previously turned into solidarity events including people of other faiths. Trustees of FN4M attended many events. Togetherness and the desire to be together was very strong.



Rabbi Warren Elf, Faith Network for Manchester



Elinor Chohan MBE, Altrincham Interfaith Group

- The Muslim community wanted to ensure that it was clear that they condemned the attack and that their voice was being heard and their point that it had nothing to do with the teachings and ideology of Islam. He also had heard some people say that Muslims needed to say this. Muslims were saying it but it took a few times for it to start to register with people who were not always ready to listen.
- Encouragingly, more people are now willing to listen. That did not mean, however, that hate crimes were not on the increase. Unfortunately they were. For example there was an arson attack on a mosque a few weeks later. That was responded to with a peace walk round the mosque in solidarity.
- Each of these events, though tragic, has been a way for the community to come together – for the Manchester attack but also for the Westminster attack and the attacks at Borough Market and Finsbury Park Mosque. There is still very much a Manchester spirit, as referenced by poet Tony Walsh, that will not be defeated by terror. There are still elements of society to reach, but there is a lot of work going on. He is very proud that FN4M has been a hub helping to enable some of this work. There have been responses throughout Greater Manchester, including, for example, in Bolton and Oldham. Many organisations are playing their part.

The following questions and comments were raised. Rabbi Elf's responses are in italics.

- *The Independent* newspaper that day reported that in a survey of 17,000 people in Britain, 62% thought faith groups did more harm than good. How can that be turned around?
Everyone needs to address this. Religion gets a bad press sometimes. There are news stories almost daily in some way attributed to religion. The negative links to

religion are because of a distortion of religious ideology. There is a need for faith communities to stand up over and over again and to keep saying that they stand for peace, love, justice, respect and solidarity. They need to do more interviews, to get in touch with media directly and to try to get good news stories published.

- Is there any difference between the response to the IRA bomb in 1996 and the response to the terror attack this year?
He was working at the North Manchester Reform Synagogue at the time of the IRA bomb and people had felt the vibration from the bomb there. The Manchester Reform Synagogue in Jackson's Row was evacuated and it was the only morning service the rabbi there had not finished (he has been there for 40 years!). More faith communities came together this time than in 1996. The IRA bomb was different in faith terms and also in terms of where the community was at that time. Also, no-one was killed in the IRA bombing, there were only casualties, which was a big difference.
- At the time of the IRA attack in 1996 the participant had been at the Sikh temple two miles away and had heard the bomb from there. The response at that time from his own Sikh community had not been very strong, but phenomenal progress had been made in the last 15 years. That momentum, particularly over the last couple of years, needs to be built on and increased. That is the way to change the views of media and others.
- Thank you to FN4M for coordinating work across Manchester. This work is making matters a lot easier for the Muslim community. Two people from Oldham lost their lives and the participant and a colleague attended their funerals. They had to negotiate to do so because feelings were running high, but there was a positive outcome from doing so.
A few days after the Manchester attack

there was a walk of Muslim scholars with the Bishop of Manchester and Rabbi Daniel Walker, from the Cathedral to St Ann's Square. They weren't sure of the reaction they were going to get but they got a standing ovation as they arrived in St Ann's Square and they were very moved.

- The Scout movement used to have problems with negative media. Nowadays stories about the Scouts are mainly positive. It is essential to get into the mindset of the media and to create good news stories. There are three Muslim Scout groups in Birmingham and they make a great effort to go out and work in the community to create good news stories. Most people read *The Metro*, *The Sun*, *The Mirror* and similar papers and it is to them that faith communities should appeal. Images of people standing together at microphones aren't enough; stories are also needed of people serving the community together.
- The participant from Islington was at Finsbury Park Mosque just before the attack took place near there. That night she had organised an iftar dinner for people interested in learning about Islam. She went in a different direction when she left mosque and only heard what had happened when she got to her friend's house. She knew several family members and friends who attended the mosque so went back to see if there was anything that could be done to help, but emergency services were on the scene by then. The response had been fantastic. It was a silver lining to the dreadful tragedy. Prince Charles, Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn had all visited.
- Response in Bolton, Blackburn, Oldham and many areas around Manchester after the Manchester Arena attack was immense. In Bolton the local authority, faith groups and community groups all responded. A vigil was held and the town square was full. Sad events such as this

have united communities. Humanity, what people share in common, is important. It is not necessarily about faith. It has taken a while to build relations with the press in Bolton but the results have been very positive. *Togetherness is winning across the country, but the hard work needs to continue. People across the UK have been affected by the Manchester attack, as many came from places such as Newcastle and Birmingham to attend the concert.*

Conversations in friendly spaces

Elinor Chohan, Altrincham Interfaith Group and Altrincham Muslim Association

Mrs Chohan made a presentation using PowerPoint and a copy of her slides is at the end of this note. A summary of her points is below.

- Altrincham Interfaith Group (AIG) was initially established in response to the 9/11 attack in the States and began as a Christian Muslim group. It was officially launched in 2003 and now has representatives from a wide range of local faith communities.
- AIG's vision is to develop a cohesive community where there is no fear of the 'other' and where, at times of tension the community can remain together and work together to ensure those tensions do not impact the peace and harmony of the town.
- AIG runs several initiatives, such as its annual shared meal at a local secondary school, annual picnics, lectures, evenings of entertainment, visits to places of worship and Friendship Circles.

- She had been leading one of the Friendship Circles for about 10 years.
- Friendship Circles are intimate and friendly ways of getting to know each other. Each has 8 to 12 people from different faith communities, meeting between 4 and 10 times a year.
- There are currently 6 active Circles.
- Meetings are in a relaxed environment, usually at someone's house or at a restaurant.
- Lots of topics have been covered over the years, such as birth, death, festivals, parenting, current affairs and – most recently – forgiveness, usually with a nominated person giving a short introduction.
- As well as discussing themes, they also have poetry evenings and discuss books.
- Solid friendships have been formed as a result of her Friendship Circle. She has attended a Hindu wedding and will shortly be attending a Jewish one in Israel.
- Those in the Circle become actual friends rather than just people from other faith communities. Labels that come with religion are removed.

Once trust is established it is easier to discuss differences without falling out.

- It is important for everyone to agree the 'house rules' and how things will be discussed.
- It is helpful to agree dates in advance and possible topics to be discussed. It is always good to have a fall back date, as people are busy and events arise. Recently, for instance, following the stabbing of Dr Nasser Kurdy outside the mosque in Altrincham, they had

cancelled their Friendship Circle meeting to attend prayers at the mosque and used the fallback date instead.

- It's important to remember people's dietary requirements if you are providing food.
- The Friendship Circles have had great impact. They bring people together and create trust. The wider community in south Manchester has bonded and the Friendship Circles have played a key role in that. They were overwhelmed by the messages of support received after Dr Kurdy had been attacked and by the turnout at the mosque. In times of need it is comforting to know that your neighbours are there for you as a person, regardless of religious labels.
- She and a friend from her Friendship Circle have set up a Manchester branch of Nisa-Nashim, the national Jewish Muslim women's network.

The following questions and comments were raised. Mrs Chohan's responses are in italics.

- What are the usual ages of those involved?
Membership tends to be older. AIG runs some youth projects, such as an arts and crafts project where children from different faiths created a mosaic. AIG is conscious of needing to reach out to youth in the community. They visit schools and school groups also visit the places of worship. It is more difficult to engage young people. Some activities appeal more, such as the picnic and anything with outdoor activities.
- Inter faith youth conferences are a good way of bringing young people together.
- Have you any good tips on how to get groups together in the first place?
That can be a challenge, especially when

trying to engage people from minority faiths, as there are less of them. There is a waiting list of people from the Christian community due to higher numbers. We actively recruit people through the annual meal, which is the biggest AIG event of the year. We also do publicity through the faith community bodies involved, for example Altrincham and Hale Muslim Association.

Dr Crabtree said that this topic had been included on the Agenda for the meeting because so many local inter faith organisations have said that they can find it hard to get to the level of personal engagement. For a long time AIG has operated successfully as an inter faith group with larger meetings and activities and has also developed the smaller personal groups. That may not be a possible for all local inter faith organisations, as they have differing time and resources available. However, being together in a safe, informal and more relaxed setting, can add something special to the development of inter faith relationships.

OBJECTIVES



- Introduction to Altrincham Interfaith Group
- What is a Friendship Circle
- Impact

AIG.

- Initially established in 2000 in response to the 9/11 attack as a group of Christian and Muslim friends meeting in each others houses
- Officially launched in May 2003, at the United Reformed Church on Cecil Road Hale.
- Representatives from the Buddhist community, Hale Churches Together, Altrincham Christians Together, Timperley Churches Together, Altrincham Muslim Association, Altrincham Unitarians, Hale Synagogue, Bowdon Synagogue, Menorah Synagogue, Manchester Reform Synagogue, Shaare Hayim Sephardi Synagogue and the World Council of Hindus. Recently, representatives of the Church of the Latter-day Saints and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association joined the committee; we also have Sikh and Baha'i members.
- Our vision is of developing a cohesive community, where there is no fear of the 'the other' and at times of tension, nationally or internationally, the community can remain together and work together to ensure those tensions do not impact the peace and harmony of our town.

WHAT IS A FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

- Running for approximately 10 years
- 8 - 12 people representing faith groups in the area
- 6 groups currently active
- Meeting from 4 to 10 times a year
- Venues is mostly at our homes or occasionally over a meal at a local restaurant lasting approximately 2 hours.
- Nominated coordinator



ALTRINCHAM INTERFAITH GROUP

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLES

Elinor Chohan

WHAT DO WE DO?

Topics discussed include:

- Practices around births, deaths, marriages and significant religious milestone events
- Festivals
- Beliefs and practice
- Engaging youth
- Parenting

WHAT DO WE DO?

- Poetry
- Favourite book
- Diet
- Current affairs - Trump, Brexit!
- International policy
- Extremism
- Hate crime

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- Start gently, get to know each other, develop trust
- Agree terms of reference "Chatham House rules"
- Agree on a programme of topics to be discussed
- Set 2 dates in advance
- Agree mode of communication
- Food/ refreshments

IMPACT

- Cohesiveness and support in responding to local, national and international events
- Friendship
- Trust
- Sharing life experiences
- Support in times of need - cohesion
- Working on wider community cohesion
- Nisa-Nashim

COMMENTS

- "It is only when we get to know each other as friends with bonds of trust can we tackle difficult questions"
- "Ordinary community members getting to know each other on a deep and personal level"
- "We have formed genuine and deep friendships and are there for one another"
- "It is very stimulating to learn about the religions of others and to see them in the light of one's own faith. To some extent the groups are spirit led and they facilitate close friendships between people of different religions"
- "Through friendships between people of different religions group members become less conscious of their labels and see each other as friends"

Afternoon Session

Reflections from Discussion Groups

Full notes from Discussion Groups are included later in this report. Below are selected key points that Groups chose to feed back to plenary, given by their chosen rapporteurs.

1. Supporting RE and inter faith engagement in schools

Rapporteur: Mufti Helal Mahmood, Oldham Interfaith Forum

- It is important to make inter faith discussions/activities outside of schools interesting and fun.
- There are many variations on the amount of time spent on inter faith issues in schools. Perhaps accredited courses could be introduced to encourage young people to become champions in this field. Birmingham might be a good city to lead on this.
- In schools there are often visits from individual Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or members of other faiths to talk about their faiths but there is not a lot of modelling of inter faith work. More modelling would help. At one school they had an OFSTED inspection during an inter faith workshop and got an 'outstanding' report.

2. Developing programmes with impact

Rapporteur: Fazal Rahim, Oldham Interfaith Forum



Fakhara Rehman, North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council

- It is important to ask at least once a year "Is our vision clear?", "Are we still on track?", "Are we still relevant?".
- Partnerships are very valuable. It is good to strengthen them and to find new ones.
- It is important to audit communications in order to make sure we are reaching different groups and new potential participants.
- Remember to affirm and celebrate the work being done by past and present members.



Brina Marks, West Cheshire Interfaith Forum

3. Getting to grips with Facebook and Twitter!

Rapporteur: Brina Marks, West Cheshire Interfaith Forum

- Social media can be used easily on different devices at any time, so there is no need to be in an office at a fixed time to use it.
- Social media is easy to understand once you've got to grips with it and it is also easy to understand for those looking at it. Posts are short updates that can be done easily.
- Social media can have a wide reach and engagement. It is good to write for particular target audiences. Remember to 'tag' organisations or people so that their followers are also reached.

4. Women and inter faith engagement

Rapporteur: Fakhera Rehman, North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council



Fazal Rahim, Oldham Interfaith Forum

- There are lots of women who have an incredible amount to contribute. Some do so. Others do not always feel able to articulate themselves or to contribute. It is really important to make sure that they are empowered to do so. Training, mentors and role models are all important for that. Timing of meetings is also important.
- There is a place for both mixed gender groups and women-only ones. It depends on what works best for those involved locally.



Puja Solanki and Chan Parmar, Bolton Interfaith Council and Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors; and Brian Hammill, Wakefield Interfaith Group

Inter Faith Week and other special days and weeks – a platform for cooperation and outreach

Dr Peter Rookes and Kathryn Azarpay, Birmingham Council of Faiths

During this presentation a number of photographs were shown. [Copies of some of these are included at the end of this note.]

Dr Rookes offered the following general reflections about Inter Faith Week activities in Birmingham.

- Their main aim is to raise the profile of faith organisations and the work they do. A second aim is to encourage faith organisations to work together and a third aim is to encourage them to engage

with civil society. There is a tendency for faith communities to engage with each other and not with the community at large.

- In particular, in Birmingham, there is engagement with the City Council. Birmingham was the first city to sign the faith covenant (<http://www.faithandsociety.org/covenant/>). There is also engagement with other statutory organisations such as health trusts, the Crown Prosecution Service and West Midlands Police.
- In 2016 there were 21 separate Inter Faith Week events in Birmingham involving about 500 people. These fall broadly into 4 categories: a launch event; cultural activities; lectures, discussions and seminars; and community projects.

Launch event

- There is always a high profile launch event organised jointly with the City Council in the Council Chamber with the Lord Mayor and civic leaders, those



Inter Faith Week activities in Birmingham

organising Inter Faith Week events and community representatives.

Cultural activities

- There are cultural activities, including an event in the faith gallery within the City Museum and Art Gallery. An event was held at Clifton Road Mosque on 'Experiences of Faith, Spirituality and Community through Art'.
- An inter faith concert was organised by local Methodists.
- There was an event led by Dances for Universal Peace.

Lectures, Discussions and Seminars

- A series of lectures, discussions and seminars usually takes place. In 2016 these were on:
 - 'Islam between Moderation and Extremity', organised by the AlMahdi Institute.
 - 'Faith Health and Wellbeing' – a seminar (the 9th twice-yearly FHW Seminar) on self-care linked to Self Care Week as well as Inter Faith Week. The health conference in the Autumn 2017 will be focusing on disability.
 - An event on 'Loving Humanity – Forgiveness and reconciliation', was held at the Nishkam Centre. The Centre is developing a Forgiveness and Reconciliation charter.
 - Birmingham Conversations were started by the Bishop of Birmingham. Representatives of different faiths get together and discuss different topics and a booklet is produced at the end of it.
- ### Community projects
- Near Neighbours held an exhibition of community projects.
 - There was an Inter Faith Week brunch, with creative wall displays and shared conversations.
 - There was inter faith food outreach to the homeless.
 - Scouts and Guides held an inter faith Remembrance commemoration on Remembrance Day.
 - 'Footsteps for a low carbon future' is one of the new projects set up by Birmingham Council of Faiths and featured during Inter Faith Week.
 - There is a need to prepare to rise to a number of challenges in preparing for Inter Faith Week, for example:
 - starting preparation early enough and getting people to commit to organising events in time for information to be publicised;



Kathryn Azarpay, Birmingham Council of Faiths



Canon Andy Pratt, Lancashire Forum of Faiths



Rajesh Patel, Dudley Borough Interfaith Network

- ensuring as wide a circulation of information as possible, through networks, websites and personal contacts;
- engaging beyond the normal supporters; and
- encouraging people to get over the fear of trying something new instead of just tried and tested activities.
- In 2017 faith guides are going to go to one of the Birmingham academies as part of their assemblies.

Ms Azarpay gave more detailed information about the event held on 'Expressions of Faith, Spirituality and Community through Art' held at Clifton Road Mosque.

- The event was advertised widely in the community and the mosque invited friends from the Jewish community, churches, the Sikh community and others

to bring along works of art or artefacts that were important to them. People were invited to the podium to speak about their artefacts.

- A local artist took part who was doing a social history project producing a movie and photographs about the local area. The event therefore brought together people from different faiths and also a narrative about the community and how it had changed over the years.
- The event was an opportunity to acknowledge and respect symbols that are important to each other's faith groups. Being respectful to what is important to others is key to establishing friendly, long term meaningful relationships.

She went on to say that:

- For inter faith events it is important to choose topics through which people can come together. Art is a good neutral

ground to bring people together. It is also a personal expression of faith and can open up a wider discussion.

- It is very important to engage with the media, especially locally. The work being done and the friendships being created are fantastic and meaningful. It's important to let other people know that this is happening.
- They are now planning their 2017 Inter Faith Week event. As food brings people together they are exploring hold an event with a quiz about different faiths, and some cooking and cake decoration.

Bringing young people together locally for inter faith encounter

Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Mr Beck gave a short update on IFN's new programme of work on youth inter faith engagement.

- The project will be looking at the current involvement of young people in inter faith work and how that can continue to be strengthened.
- IFN produced, in 2004, a youth inter faith action guide called *Connect: Different Faiths, Shared Values*. It remains the most popular download from the IFN website. Much of the information in it is timeless, for instance why people get involved in inter faith activity. However, there are also many case studies and examples linked to organisations working in this area that need updating. A key part of the project will be updating the guide. This will be done in consultation with young

people. So, too, will be a linked piece of work to create a discussion paper which will come to IFN's National Meeting in 2018. This will seek the views of young people on how inter faith programmes and structures can be adapted so that they feel more able to, and want to, engage with them.

- There is an Advisory Group which includes young people and there will also be Focus Group sessions. A questionnaire will be sent out to find out about the work of local inter faith organisations and many other organisations in this area.
- The project will take place over the next six or so months and he or other IFN colleagues will be in touch in different ways.

The following questions were raised and comments made. Mr Beck's responses are in italics.



Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Network for the UK

- It might be good to have an inter faith network for young people run by young people. It's important to offer young people the training they need.
That is one of the questions that will be explored by the groups of young people as part of the project. There is a fledgling young people's inter faith network in the UK, which is being supported by Religions for Peace UK. It has met a few times and has a steering group. IFN is in touch with them and with a number of other organisations engaging with young people.
- Are Scouts and Guides included? Both do faith badges. There is a Muslim Scout Fellowship that does a lot of good work.
IFN is engaging with several non-faith based youth organisations as part of the project and Scouts and Guides will be part of those.
- What is the timeline for the launch of the updated Connect guide?
It is due to be launched at IFN's 2018 National Meeting, in early July.

Bringing young people together locally for inter faith encounter

Chan Parmar, Development Officer Bolton Interfaith Council and Puja Solanki, Bolton Young Interfaith Ambassador

Mr Parmar gave a brief introduction to the work of the Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors Forum (BIYAF).

- The BIYAF has existed for around 10 years. It began originally as a mixed gender group but is currently a female-only group. It has 12 members at present. There were up to 22 but a number have

moved on or gone to university. Some at university have decided to stay as members and come back when they can.

- BIYAF is about giving young people social skills, about them engaging with the community, organising events and taking ownership. It aims to make them more knowledgeable about the world and equipped to engage with society around them. Bolton Interfaith Council (BIC) supports, guides and helps them, but at the end of the day the aim is for the young people to have the opportunity to do activities themselves.
- Activities include organising charity events, such as for Nepal; vigils, for example for the victims of the Manchester attack; discussions with guest speakers; engaging with civic leaders including the Mayor; residential; and training days. The Young Ambassadors lead on all of these.
- Ms Jaya Patel, the Youth MP for Bolton, is one of the Young Ambassadors.
- BIYAF is inspiring and entirely volunteer led. He is very proud of the Young Ambassadors and privileged to be involved in the work of BIYAF.
- Working with young people with the ethos of inter faith working is an investment for the future and there is lot that can be done collectively through a number of projects and activities which would help them, as well as the wider community, to make a difference.

Miss Solanki offered the following reflections.

- She very much enjoys being a Young Ambassador.
- She and the other Youth Ambassadors are actively involved in organising events, supported by BIC. Most recently they



Puja Solanki, Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors, and Chan Parmar, Bolton Interfaith Council

helped with the Mayor's inauguration event.

- The Ambassadors have t-shirts. which they designed, which say DIVERSE on the back. The letters stand for Dignity, Inspire, Vision, Empathy, Respect, Strength, Equality.

The following questions were raised and comments made. Responses from Mr Parmar and Miss Solanki are in italics.

- The Young Ambassadors came to a United Reformed Church Synod day in Southport. There was a sense of celebration and joy through their dancing and singing. It was an amazing occasion.
- Have you (Ms Solanki) enjoyed the event today? Would it be a good idea for young people to come regularly to these types of events?
Yes. If young people come to more events like this it will encourage working together.

- Will there be male Young Ambassadors in BIYAF as well?

For now the plan is for it to remain female only.

- How did you come up with the words on your t-shirt?

They are the best words to describe BIYAF.

- What have you learned being with young women of other faiths?

I've learned more about their faiths, including similarities and differences. We are all the same generation/age so we are used to the same things. No matter who you are, you have to respect one another.

- Which faiths are involved in BIYAF?

The main faiths involved are Christian, Hindu and Muslim because they are the main faiths in Bolton but young people from any faith or none can join. There will be information about the Forum in the Bolton News and BIC is talking to schools in Bolton about it. The commitment of parents is vital. Without their support, it wouldn't happen.

Mr Birdi said that it was vital to engage with young people, to learn from them, to find out what they want and to involve them in decision-making. They are the future.

Closing reflections

Sister Patricia Harriss, York Interfaith Group

Sr Patricia offered the following reflections.

- It has been a great joy today to meet such a variety of people, to hear so much about all that is happening, and to get new ideas – I had never thought, for example, of asking people to bring ingredients, then pairing them off to cook together!



Sister Patricia Harriss, York Interfaith Group

- I was especially interested in what we heard this morning from Altrincham about building up ongoing multi faith house groups (Friendship Circles).
- It has all made me think again about where to begin on inter faith activities. Manchester, all of this side of the Pennines, and Birmingham, are very different from York. In York we have individuals and small groups from many faiths, but few faith communities: we are still a mono-cultural area. So we tend to have informative, topic-based meetings – though not always with 'expert' speakers; sometimes we have a small panel from among ourselves, followed by general sharing in the circle.
- Today has suggested another approach we might explore: to begin with the people, and find ways of bringing them together across the faiths. I shall take that idea home to think about with my companions on the committee; it certainly confirms a suggestion already received from a member, about greater diversity of activities and times of day, and therefore perhaps attracting younger people.

Closing reflections

Chirag Khajuria, Blackpool Faith Forum

Mr Khajuria offered the following reflections.

- I have only joined Blackpool Faith Forum (BFF) relatively recently and this is the first IFN event I have attended. Thank you all for sharing news of your work. I didn't know there was so much inter faith activity taking place around the UK. When small events and activities take place they have a ripple effect on others. It has been good to find out about it all. I



Chirag Khajuria, Blackpool Faith Forum

will share it with colleagues at BFF and in my own community.

- Puja Solanki noted that she and her Young Ambassadors colleagues have many similarities, such as their ages and location. There is so much more that we have in common than divides us. We all need to take that into account when we attend these types of meetings.
- Thank you again for the new perspectives.

Closing reflections

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

Dr Crabtree offered the following reflections.

- As Ashley Beck mentioned earlier, IFN's youth inter faith action guide is called *Connect*. Much inter faith engagement, no matter what one's age, is about connecting: entering into relationships of learning and dialogue; exploring difference and commonality; and working together to make a difference to our communities and society overall.
- I have had the privilege today of facilitating two discussion groups and listening to inspiring presentations and hearing interesting questions. Sometimes people ask what IFN does. It helps these conversations take place and in a quiet way helps share those conversations by making sure they are well recorded and widely shared. It also helps to remind local authorities and other agencies why this work matters.
- I have been struck again today by how people are trying to increase the impact of work locally through stronger communication. In the discussion groups people raised issues of reaching out, communicating, and making sure media and others know why the work is important. I have learned how well many groups are using social media and other forms of communication.
- There have been many Tweets and Facebook posts about today's event. Let's get that message out there. But let's not leave behind others for whom the world of social media is moving too fast. It is important to involve young people but it's important to keep all generations involved. Joyce Pickard, who died this

year aged 95, was the oldest member of York Interfaith Group. She used to get on her bicycle and deliver hard copies to those members who did not use email. That is a wonderful symbol of inclusion. Young, old, whatever your background, everyone needs to feel included in this vital inter faith work.

Closing words from the Chair

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

Mr Birdi offered the following reflections.

- It has been a wonderful day. It has been great to meet so many people and to hear stories about the excellent work that you are doing. IFN is a reflection of the work that you do.
- It is important to make sure that all our work is promoted. We often just get on and do what needs to be done but we rarely let people know it's happening.
- People of faith often don't ask for praise, but you are worthy of it. So much of this work is voluntary and yet is often the backbone of our community. All your work is greatly appreciated.

Mr Birdi thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions, including speakers, discussion group presenters, facilitators and rapporteurs. He also thanked the staff at Methodist Central Buildings and the IFN staff and volunteers.

Discussion groups

Discussion Group 1: RE and inter faith engagement in schools

Exploring how local inter faith bodies do, and can, work with schools and Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) on supporting Religious Education in the curriculum.

This discussion group was facilitated by David Hampshire, Assistant Director, IFN, and included an opening presentation from Alison Bradley, Liverpool Community Spirit.

Mr Hampshire welcomed participants, and explained the background to the theme of the workshop, including his own experience of work on Religious Education in various roles. He noted that most RE teaching in England focusses on religions 'in themselves' and rarely on how different religious communities work positively together. This workshop was an opportunity to explore how pupils can learn about local inter faith work where they are and the importance of inter faith relationships.

Ms Alison Bradley, Liverpool Community Spirit (LCS), was invited to talk. She spoke about LCS's work with schools, including on RE and inter faith engagement. She made the following points:

- LCS is an inter faith educational charity, bringing together people of different faiths, beliefs and backgrounds in Liverpool and beyond. The work of the

charity has been recognised as innovative and unique.

- Liverpool is particularly well known for its two cathedrals, connected by the appropriately named Hope Street. Liverpool is an extremely diverse city. LCS has been fortunate to work with many of its communities.
- LCS aims to bring people together in a spirit of understanding and to teach people about different faiths and cultures. It works with people of all ages, delivering a range of activities such as workshops. These are delivered both in the context of outreach and at its own Centre, located in a townhouse, a welcoming 'homely' environment. Its work with schools is mainly conducted at the Centre, which is adjacent to Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral.
- The office can accommodate around 60 pupils at any one time. On average, the charity hosts one school visit per week during term time.
- The charity has a small staff team, but also works with volunteers from a wide variety of faiths, backgrounds and walks of life. Its work is funded by grants of varying sizes, including from the National Lottery.
- Staff set up a room with artefacts from a particular faith tradition for the pupils to interact with. This is called a 'home for hospitality'. Pupils are invited to the 'living room' environment, which is where the 'home for hospitality' is based. Volunteers from the relevant tradition are then invited to talk to the pupils. These sessions are not treated as traditional lessons but, rather, as opportunities to



Participants in plenary discussion

- meet people practising different faiths and to talk with them and ask them questions. Children and young people gain an enormous amount from these sorts of interactions. The practice of religion is unique to each individual – this makes these workshops rewarding as they are always different.
- LCS also teaches through the medium of cooking, and this has also proved to be an effective way of encouraging children to interact with different faiths and cultures.
 - Staff try to create a down to earth, homely and friendly atmosphere. They have received a great deal of positive feedback from these experiences which have proven to be very good ways to learn.
 - The charity is currently set up to teach about themes from Islam, Judaism and Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. It does not teach about ‘mainstream’ Christianity because the Anglican Cathedral nearby already runs an extensive educational programme. Staff can also cater for learning about Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Humanism.
 - The charity can also visit schools, if schools do not have capacity to go to it. In those cases, a ‘faith carousel’ is operated, where small groups of pupils can visit stalls each explaining the basic practices and principles of six different faiths. Each stall is staffed by a different volunteer focusing on a specific area, such as an aspect of a faith tradition.
 - The charity charges for these workshops, but tries to keep costs to a minimum. Volunteers are able to claim expenses. It has been recognised that there is a barrier to costs for Religious Education projects. The charity charges £3.50 per pupil for a ‘home for hospitality’ visit from a school. If staff are visiting a school, a half day usually costs around £150. Assemblies are often taken for free.
 - Participants are encouraged to visit the Liverpool Community Spirit website, which is at www.liverpoolcommunityspirit.org



Alison Bradley, Liverpool Community Spirit

Discussion points

- Chesterfield Interfaith Forum has often found it difficult to fund activities in the classroom. This requires the time and dedication of volunteers. Schools can sometimes be unwilling to pay for these services, despite the clear value that they offer.
- It was interesting to hear that Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is being explored in Liverpool. In East Africa there are models of faith communities living alongside one another in interesting ways that could provide educational examples for more schools.
- The educational experience of pupils in RE becomes very different when activities are moved outside of the classroom, for example into the home or into places of worship. This is something that schools could look at more.
- Bolton Interfaith Council places a great deal of emphasis on working with young people. Faith trails have been found to be a valuable way of educating pupils from local schools about faith communities in its area. These faith trails visit mainly mosques, churches and mandirs. 4,500 primary and secondary pupils have now gone on these faith trails. Rural schools also participate, and have found the trails particularly valuable, as these pupils can be given an experience of diversity that is not found in their area.
- It is sometimes difficult for local inter faith organisations to establish links with schools, particularly with headteachers, and to make the value of their work from an educational perspective known to them.
- It is important for local inter faith organisations to develop a network of schools related contacts: directly with schools and also through other RE mechanisms, such as SACREs and RE Hubs. These make opportunities in schools easier to come by and marketing much easier. It is important to take opportunities to meet headteachers and RE teachers, and to develop relationships wherever possible.

- Inter faith work at a local level is all about building relationships. Bolton Interfaith Council noted that because of its established links in the community, it had faith trails booked with schools well into the following year.
- One of the most rewarding aspects of inter faith work with young people of school age was seeing the joy that was taken from visiting environments that were not their own. They genuinely appreciate it. The success of inter faith work is about changing perceptions, and this is a continual process. Trust and relationships need to be built over time.
- Inter Faith Week is an excellent way for local inter faith organisations to engage with schools and other RE bodies, such as SACREs. Bolton Interfaith Council was bringing together over 120 school children during Inter Faith Week to learn about different faiths. In past years this had been a wonderful and rewarding experience.
- Lancashire Forum of Faith's area covers over 500 primary schools and more than 100 secondary schools. Lots of these schools want speakers to come and talk to pupils about their faiths. There is a wide variety of types of school and ages of the pupils being addressed and it is not easy to use standard presentations. It would be good to have a good practice model to allow smaller voluntary organisations to respond well.
- Oldham Inter Faith Forum did receive a small amount of money from the local authority, which was extremely helpful. This was in addition to support from the SACRE. As a result, they had visited nearly every school in their area, which amounted to engaging with 12,000 pupils.
- When visiting schools it was important to 'model' inter faith engagement. If local faith leaders of different faiths come into a school together this sends a positive message about inter faith cooperation. It is also important when visiting schools to be clearly identifiable as belonging to a faith community. That helps pupils to become more comfortable with the visibility and identity of people of faith. This is important in areas both with and without religious diversity.
- Engaging teachers as well as pupils is vital for successful engagement with schools.
- When conducting work with schools, it is important to also bring pupils out of the school environment and into the community, which is supported by visits to schools. The Faith Encounter Programme in Birmingham has been successful in enabling pupils in schools to visit places of worship. These tours are conducted by an accredited guide and have proven an excellent way of engaging pupils with inter faith work.
- Engaging with schools has become the main part of the work of West Cheshire Interfaith Forum, and this has now formally become an 'offshoot' of the group. Volunteers from faith backgrounds visit schools to conduct assemblies and other work. This work is spread by word of mouth, and has been very successful.
- Faith Network for Manchester has been successfully conducting inter faith work with pupils at both primary and secondary levels, as well as with college students. Care does, nonetheless, need to be taken to ensure this work is carefully adapted to the age of those present.
- North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council has been involved with the organisation of a large event held in memory of Jo Cox MP,

involving 24 local schools. The event has had an enormous impact, and has brought young people of a range of faiths and beliefs together. The event has attracted lots of attention, including from the BBC.

- One gurdwara in Manchester has a long standing history of welcoming school children in to learn about their faith community. It is important for faith communities to be prepared to do this, as this is one of the key ways that they can engage with people of all ages.

Mr Hampshire noted that:

- It is important, if possible, for local inter faith organisations to make contact and establish relationships with their local SACRE. One local inter faith organisation known to him had assisted with the early stages of preparation for a locally agreed syllabus and as a result of this learning about inter faith relationships are required as part of RE in that syllabus. Partnerships are vital in ensuring the best syllabus is put forward.
- Pupils in schools are highly rewarded by experiences such as visiting a local place of worship, and are appreciative of the generosity and learning provided by members of faith communities. Local inter faith organisations are in a unique position to provide this learning and enjoyment.

Discussion Group 2: Developing programmes with impact

Exploring some of the factors that groups have identified as helping their work have impact – and also dealing with some of the day to day challenges of sustaining and developing local inter faith initiatives.

This discussion group was facilitated by Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, IFN, who gave a brief opening presentation. There was also a presentation from Mr Chirag Khajuria of Blackpool Faith Forum.

Dr Crabtree welcomed participants.

She explained that the topic and framing of this discussion group drew on local inter faith groups' comments and requests at past IFN events. She added that in her experience many groups are very self-critical, always feeling that they never do enough or have enough impact, even though they are doing some fantastic work. This discussion was about how to strengthen and build on the positive.

Points from her introductory presentation are below. These complement her handout for the discussion group, a copy of which is at the end of this note.

Our vision and our goals

- It is good for organisations to look at these at least once a year and to check whether they are still relevant and right for the organisation.

Scoping and planning

- Organisations often run out of time for planning but it is important to make time for it.



Hilary Hopwood and Shaheda Susiwala, East Meets West – Women Together in Lancaster; and Puja Solanki and Chan Parmar, Bolton Interfaith Council and Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors

- Is anyone else doing work similar to you? Is there any initiative you can partner with?
- Sometimes the plans may change, for example because of the impact of terrorist attacks.
- Organisations usually do this when the organisation is set up but don't always carry on doing it on a regular basis.
- Ask whether you are still in touch with the right people. Have the contacts for local places of worship or other local organisations changed?

Resources

- Many inter faith organisations have less funding now than at some times in the past.
- Within the discussion group participants, 3 said that they were from organisations with some local authority funding.

Maintaining and growing participation

- Look at what places of worship/faith communities there are in the area.
- Each year it is helpful to look at who is involved in the organisation and who is responsible for reaching out.

Organisational underpinnings

- Clarity about running an organisation is important. Is it clear how the committee and officers are elected?
- Systems need to be reliable and dependable to make sure everything runs smoothly.
- Is there a person in charge of communications?
- Do we have social media skills? Does everyone in our group use email? If not, are we making sure people of all skills and ages are involved? Joyce Pickard, who died this year aged 95, was a member of York Inter Faith Group. She

would go out on her bicycle delivering hard copies of information to people who did not use email. This is an example of including everybody.

- Audit your organisation's communications every year.
- Sometimes people are anxious about not being able to use social media. Consider arranging training.

Programmes

- Many local inter faith organisations have annual events or programmes of events. Look at your target audiences and consider whether they are being reached.
- Find one good activity that another local group in the UK has done and try it out. Try an Inter Faith Week event!
- Try a faith trail.
- Try longer term and short term projects.
- Special days and weeks can be useful. Sadaqa Day, Sewa Day and Mitzvah Day are social action days led by different faith communities. Their work involves, for example, environmental projects, helping refugees and food banks.
- Know your local MP and your local councillors and invite them to events.

Affirmation and celebration

- Local inter faith organisations are sometimes very critical of their own work, when they are doing excellent work. It is vital to affirm the work being done.
- As a participant at an earlier local inter faith event said, 'Have a sense of joy'. Amid all the challenges, it is still a joy and a privilege to be together and to be part of bring about positive change in society.

- It is good to honour those involved in the past and present.

- Interfaith Wolverhampton had recently been given the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. It has been running for 40 years, since the days of Enoch Powell, working against hatred and racism and reminding people of the positive role that faith communities play in the city of Wolverhampton and the life of its community together. At the Award ceremony the early founder members were given special gifts and there was a photo of the late Mrs Ivy Gutridge above the speaker's platform – a lady who was unstoppable when driving forward inter faith engagement in Wolverhampton.

- Build in time each year to recognise members' contributions to the work and to affirm the positive things that your organisation has been doing.

Mr Chirag Khujaria was then invited to speak about Blackpool Faith Forum (BFF) and its recent Faith Agreement with the local authority. His reflections are below.

- Sometimes local faith groups isolate themselves and miss out on finding out what other faiths are doing. That is one of the reasons why local inter faith organisations are so important.
- BFF decided to work to build a partnership with the local authority, in order to have a framework for dialogue with faith communities, not just funding.
- The 'Faith Agreement' with the local authority took about a year to create and was launched on 19 September 2017. It has a link to the 'faith covenant' (encouraged by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society and Faith Action). However, following discussion BFF decided to use the word 'partnership' rather than the word 'covenant'.



Participants in workshop discussion

- It is very good to work together with the local authority in shaping local communities and to have an input into big decisions when it matters. Rather than always criticising it is important to get involved. BFF is excited to see what can be achieved through the partnership.
- Ignorance can only be dispelled through knowledge of other faiths. That is one of the reasons for creating the partnership with the local authority.
- He is a member of the Fylde Coast Hindu Society (FCHS), a small group of like-minded Hindus. The Society began about 20 years ago as a group of people who had come to the UK, many as doctors, and were away from home and wanted to celebrate festivals such as Diwali. He had realised it was not enough just to be part of that Hindu Society and so had also joined BFF.
- His predecessor at the FCHS had had an NHS background and was keen to create a project on mental health. So with BFF and others they have created a project called 'Grow Your Own Happiness' about low level mental health issues, such as low self-esteem. Through discussion and listening to speakers people come together and can see that there is light after darkness. After about 7 sessions there had been a positive impact on people's lives. They had wanted to do this sort of project for a while but did not know what to do. Blackpool Council had helped with small donation of about £200 to help get the project started.
- FCHS would be hosting a Diwali Function in December. A lot of other faith leaders and some of their communities are planning to join them to celebrate.

Discussion points

Partnerships

- East Meets West Women Together in Lancaster (EMW) has been running for 10 years. It has been transformed in the last year by partnership working with Lancaster and Morecombe City of Sanctuary, which is working with asylum seekers and refugees. EMW's particular niche is offering drop in facilities for women. It has brought EMW into partnership with many groups in the area and feels much better known and better connected. It is now more included and consulted. Being part of a local network

has transformed its work. The generosity of other groups to EMW's projects has been very good: some groups have offered food or outings; sewing circles have donated money; organisations have offered to involve the women in order to learn skills that produce income for them; and business courses have offered for free to help women learn to become independent.

- Social enterprise often grows out of partnerships.
- Islington has a Women's Network which currently meets in the offices of the local MP (Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP). All the women's groups in Islington come together every couple of months and discuss issues facing them, such as funding and work arounds for this including skill sharing and space sharing. Building these networks can then lead to partnerships.
- The central mosque in Birmingham, which holds about 20,000 people, plays a large part in the Love not Hate campaign. It is clear that the support from Moseley Inter Faith Forum (MIFF) for the mosque is very important to that. MIFF's participant is often invited to events at the mosque as a local inter faith practitioner on behalf of several groups.
- Islington Faiths Forum does a lot of assemblies, with a number of members going into schools as a team. It is important for faith leaders to be seen together in solidarity. Since the visits of Prince Charles and other leaders to the Finsbury Park Mosque, more faith community leaders have been seen standing together there and at other events.
- Earlier in the year IFN produced a new expanded edition of *Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of our Faith Communities* in partnership with

IFN event for local inter faith practitioners – 17 October 2017, Manchester

Workshop 2

Developing – programmes for impact

1. Our Vision and our goals
 - What are our founding objectives, our vision and our 'mission'
2. Scoping and Planning
 - What may our vision and goals mean in our current operating environment?
 - Is it time to review what we are doing? What might be involved in that?
 - The importance of planning
 - Scoping - scanning the environment
 - What are local needs?
 - Who else is engaging with similar needs?
 - Considering partnership working on particular strands
3. Resources
 - Planning a programme with an eye to resources
 - Human resources
 - Financial and in-kind resources
 - Dangers of being 'funding driven'
4. Maintaining and growing participation
 - Patterns of participation
 - Encouraging participation
 - Dealing with challenges
 - Handling and responding well to change
 - Reaching out to particular groups (younger, older, women, different faiths/ beliefs)
 - Membership and wider participation/engagement
5. Organisational underpinnings
 - The less visible but crucial underpinnings of successful programmes
 - People
 - Communication - making your events known and raising their profile
6. Programmes
 - Building a programme
 - Different activities
 - Targeting different audiences
 - Faith groups
 - Involving civic leaders
 - A distinctive dimension to your programme
 - Special Weeks and Days
 - Partnership working
7. Affirmation and celebration

the then Department for Communities and Local Government, the Home Office, the Crown Prosecution Service, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the National Fire Chiefs' Council. It is about building on long term local inter faith relationships as a way of preventing hate crime. Unless the relationships are built initially, it is hard to respond effectively.

Media and communications

- Altrincham Interfaith Group has good working relationships with the local media. It provides a Thought for the Week, submitted by a different faith community each week. It tries to ensure that this is a message to the wider community, not just faith communities speaking to themselves. There is a need to break down barriers between larger

communities. It was heartening to see in the previous week's newspaper, letters of support that had been sent in for surgeon Dr Nasser Kurdy who had been stabbed and this had brought communities together.

- The 'No to Hate' Awards took place recently. Messages of solidarity are exceptionally important.
- It is worth developing social media and using Facebook and Twitter.
- Oldham Inter Faith Forum recently started using Facebook and Twitter. Its members struggle with technology so a friend of the Forum has begun assisting with social media and developing a website. It is good to be able to see how many hits you've had on a calendar on website for example. Social media is the future and needs to be used.
- Inter Faith Week is a good time to push out stories to local media. Consider getting a local paper to run a series of faith profiles, for example each week during the month of November.
- Communications can be challenging. For about two years Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M) has been supporting an initiative called We Stand Together. It has been difficult to get buy in from Manchester Evening News. Recently though, the newspaper has started a whole campaign of its own called 'We Stand Together' without discussing this with FN4M. FN4M is now trying to give them background to it and to explain its history.
- Often inter faith work goes on well in an area for some time unnoticed and the media only become interested when there is a big story or a good hashtag. It is important to ensure that local inter faith organisations are at the heart of the discussion about inter faith work in the

area. Sometimes media use a hook of more visible people or more interesting people for their stories. For example, Islington Faiths Forum did very good behind the scenes work after the attack at Finsbury Park Mosque, as did Faiths Forum for London.

- After the Oldham riots in 2001 lots of faith leaders were shown on television. From that they learned how to manage working with the media. It is now streamlined so that enquiries come through one office and Oldham Inter Faith Forum nominates someone to speak to the press.

Planning, vision, goals, resources and participation

- Clifton Road Mosque in Birmingham has its own inter faith group. This has developed over the last 2 years and has a good network with other faiths. Some of its members were invited to participate in Birmingham Council of Faiths. One of its members is an IT expert, who is now helping Birmingham Council of Faiths. It is exceptional that the mosque has its own inter faith committee. It held an Inter Faith Week event last year.
- It is important to connect with statutory bodies but most ordinary people are only interested in what they see happening on the ground. How do we as inter faith practitioners relate to this and signpost people to organisations on a wider scale, for example referring a homeless person to a faith social action project?
- Local inter faith organisations can be a good place for signposting. First points of contact can be put on websites, for example, and the organisation can work with local authority to find out who can assist there.

- It's important to be able to measure impact of such assistance. This can perhaps be done by the number of referrals.
- FN4M is called to take part in many initiatives. Its committee looks at scoping and planning every 4 months, otherwise FN4M could be drawn into too many areas and also have difficulties reporting on targets for multiple funders.
- It is helpful to work with local authorities but sometimes they just want to 'tick boxes'. Deeper engagement means really working in partnership, not in name only. It requires hard work.
- Funding from local authorities can be very helpful, so it is better to tick a box and receive it than not, but it is better still also to have a deeper relationship.
- We live in challenging times, so there is often a focus on standing together in inter faith work. However, other work and the nuts and bolts of running an organisation are also crucial. Without good structures and hard working people inter faith bodies will not survive and thrive.

Dr Crabtree thanked everyone for their contributions. She noted that IFN would shortly be starting a project updating *The Local Inter Faith Guide* (<https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/the-local-inter-faith-guide-faith-community-co-operation-in-action-second-e>). The update will include more learning from local inter faith organisations. Ideas for case studies to include in the updated version are welcomed.

Discussion Group 3: Getting to grips with Facebook and Twitter!

A chance to learn how to set up and use Facebook and Twitter and to maximise impact.

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

Mr Beck welcomed participants. Points from his introductory presentation are below. These complement the presentation slides for the workshop, copies of which are at the end of this note.

Facebook

- Facebook was established in 2004. It has now become the world's largest social media platform, and in 2017 surpassed two billion users.
- Users on Facebook have a personal profile. The site has now expanded to include 'pages' and 'groups' which allow different forms of interaction.
- The homepage on facebook.com allows users to create an organisational page, and this is useful with the context of local inter faith organisations in mind. 'Non-profit' can be selected as one of many 'type of organisation' options. A personal account can then be selected to act as administrator of the page. All organisational pages require an administrator.
- The 'about' button on an organisational page gives you lots of options for filling in information about your organisation. Picking a name is also very important on Facebook – users should use a full organisational name, though abbreviations are sometimes necessary



Sukhbir Singh, Faith Network for Manchester

for things like the page link/username. It is nonetheless best to avoid these, as they make the organisation harder to find and tag.

- Facebook uses tagging to help users identify who the posts and any images or video content features, and also to notify other users when they are featured in something.
- Facebook allows users to limit the number of members in a group.
- Facebook allows page administrators to delete and hide content posted by other users to that page, as well as to block accounts.
- Unless content is particularly offensive, hateful or defamatory it can be wise to let other users respond. Users that engage in 'trolling' usually just want to grandstand, rather than to engage in any sort of substantive dialogue.

Twitter

- Twitter was founded in 2006, growing in 2017 to have more than 300 million active users. Twitter has a character limit of 140 characters, though this will double in November to 280 characters for all languages except Japanese. Character limits include all characters, including spaces.
- When using Twitter, it is sometimes helpful to imagine that you are writing in verse, perhaps in the form of a haiku. It is sometimes challenging to condense thoughts concisely into such a short space.
- Unlike Facebook, Twitter does not distinguish between individuals and organisations. All accounts operate on the same basis.
- Twitter can be easily used and controlled on a smartphone or tablet, just as easily as on a computer or laptop.
- Twitter uses both tagging and hashtagging to help users search through content. Tagging helps to identify the users featured in a tweet, telling other users that they are mentioned in a tweet or feature in a photo, while hashtagging enables identification of the content of the tweet by acting as a thematic marker. Tagging can also be used to get in touch with people by tweeting at them.
- Twitter does not feature a central repository of hashtags that have to be chosen from. Users can create their own hashtags, and then publicise them. For example, at day events for local inter faith practitioners, IFN uses the hashtag #IFNLocal. This enables those at the event to see all tweets about it in one place, but also helps other Twitter users see an aspect of IFN's work in one place. For Inter Faith Week, IFN encourages use of the hashtag #InterFaithWeek, which

helps users see tweets about the Week in one convenient location, helping to make lots of smaller activities have more impact. Tweets using this hashtag reached millions of people in 2016.

- It is important to use hashtags that are more general to tap into wider conversations about larger subjects, for example to do with current events, or inter faith issues on a global scale.
- Hashtags also help to build up a picture of what a user is interested in over time. Using them will not instantly raise the profile of a user, but will do so gradually as their Twitter presence grows, and as other users recognise them to be interested in or a source of information on certain subjects.
- Users have total control over the content of their tweets. It is nonetheless important for users to have a secure password, not known to anyone else (except colleagues that also use the account if sharing).
- If a single organisational Twitter account is being operated by a number of colleagues, it is important to agree a system for tweeting in advance. Local inter faith organisations may also wish to trial a content management system, which can assist with this.
- IFN staff generally check with one another before sending a tweet. This helps to avoid mistakes, both in terms of content and typing errors but also accidentally posting across each other.
- Twitter does allow users to create private accounts which are only visible to the followers of a user, but this is not generally helpful in an organisational context. To follow a private account, you will need to ask the owner and wait to be approved.

- Twitter now allows users to block one another, particularly if they are targeted with offensive or inappropriate content.

Good practice

- IFN has a policy not to accept complaints via social media, it considers this approach to be good practice.
- IFN is glad to provide assistance, where it is able to, to local inter faith organisations experiencing difficulties on social media with negative or offensive comments being posted on their accounts.

Benefits

- The most obvious benefit to the use of social media is that it enables smaller organisations, such as local inter faith groups, to raise awareness of their work and to reach new constituencies.
- Social media also allows organisations to exert more control over the public image that they project onto other users. A common grievance felt by local inter faith organisations is that the good work that they are doing is not often picked up by mainstream media organisations, such as newspapers. Social media allows organisations to tell their own stories, at least to some extent. A good example of this is Inter Faith Week, which was noticed by over 6 million social media users last year. For context, Britain's most popular newspaper has an average daily circulation of 1.6million.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Hashtagging can also be used to search through posts and tweets. More than one hashtag can also be used at once, allowing users to search for quite specific topics, as well as more general ones. For example, a search for '#interfaith' would yield tweets about inter faith activity from all over the world, but a search for

‘#interfaith #birmingham’ would yield results showing inter faith activity in Birmingham. Using your location as a hashtag is often a good idea.

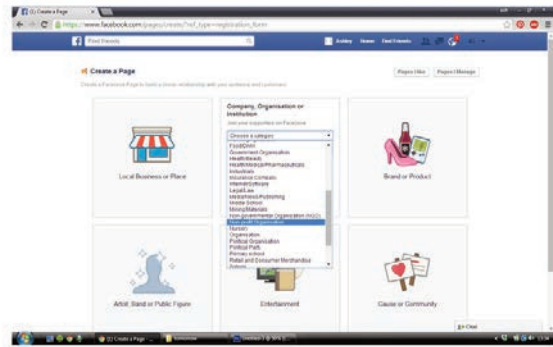
- It is important to be aware of ‘trolling’, and this is an issue on both Twitter and Facebook.
- Facebook now contains an effective feature to guard against trolling. The higher the number of users that report another user engaging in offensive behaviour, the more likely it becomes that Facebook will block the account.
- Twitter has a mechanism for users to report one another in the event of offensive or hateful language being used. This can lead to Twitter itself blocking accounts.
- It is important to remember when tweeting that content cannot be edited after it has been posted. It can only be deleted. To change what has been said, a user therefore needs to delete it and write it out again. This can, however, be detrimental if the tweet has already attracted attention for positive reasons.
- It is useful to be aware that twitter allows users to tag up to ten other users in a photograph. This can be a good way of attracting attention to the tweet without using the character limit.
- If a user’s tweet is re-tweeted, and the user then subsequently wants to delete the tweet, they cannot prevent its content being seen through the accounts of the user that has re-tweeted. This means that it is still important to be certain of what is being said before a tweet is posted.
- One local inter faith organisation had historically been wary of using social media for fear of making mistakes or creating the wrong impression in the public sphere. It has recently changed its mind, as it was recognised that engaging with social media was a necessary part of reaching out to new constituencies, particularly young people.
- When using social media it is also vitally important to be clear about who the target audience is. Social media is most effective when targeting specific constituencies. If you know who you want to talk to, and what you want to say, you will thrive on social media.
- One local inter faith organisation had held an inter faith cricket match between vicars and imams in the local area. A tweet about the match tagged a famous cricketer, who then re-tweeted it. This user had half a million followers, and as a result, over 45,000 people from all over the world saw the tweet. This significantly increased the impact of the tweet.
- Local inter faith organisations may wish to engage with local journalists on social media.

A very brief introduction to using Facebook 'pages'

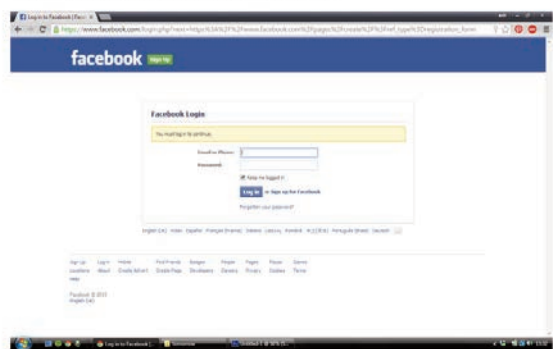


Before we begin

- Facebook is primarily designed with people in mind and the most common way to use it is as yourself.
- But you can set up a 'page' for a charity or organisation.
- There are also 'Groups' where people discuss particular topics.
- We will focus on 'pages'.



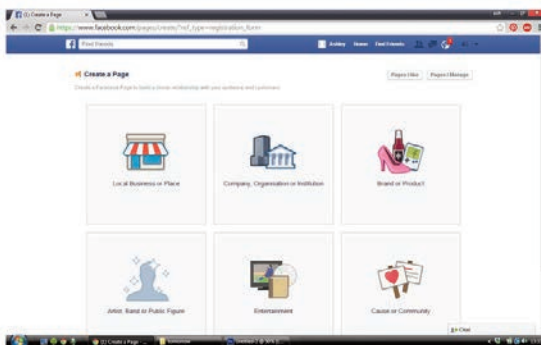
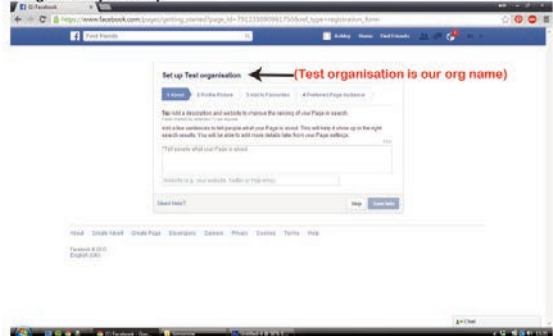
You'll be told to login. You can either use your personal account to administrate a page, or create a new one for your organisation.



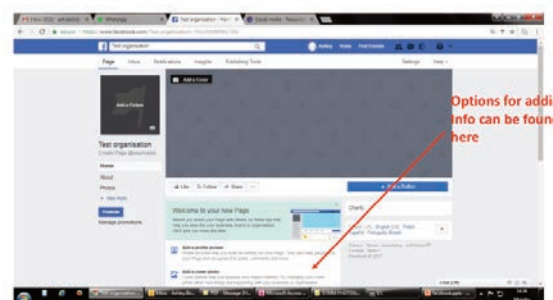
Getting started – www.facebook.com. Click on the link by the arrow to create a new page.



You'll be asked to complete various bits of information about your organisation. This stage is quite simple, so we will skip ahead. (You can also skip ahead and add things later if you want).



This is what your new page will look like if you skip through without adding pictures or info. You can do it from this page, too.



This is the IFN Facebook page as it appears when logged in as the administrator. The arrow below shows how to get to the 'about' section.



You can then select the 'like as your page' option.



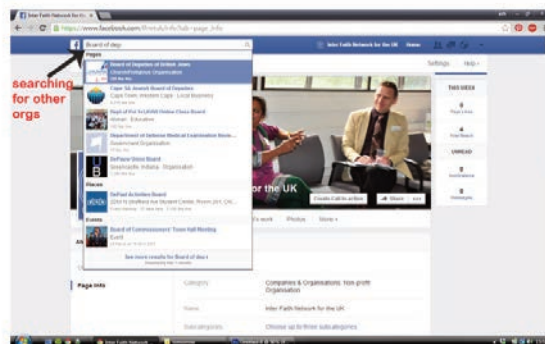
On the 'About' page, there are lots more options for adding information about your organisation. You can click to edit these.



You can then select the 'like as your page' option.



If you want to find other organisation pages, people, groups etc. begin typing in the search bar as below. Facebook will suggest some before you finish typing.



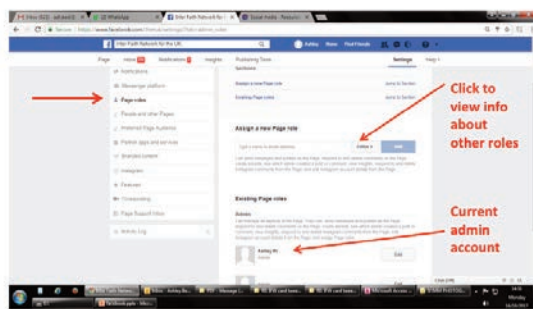
The image below shows how to find the pages you manage. You can manage pages using your personal account if you want. I prefer to keep personal and work accounts separate, and use an account called 'Ashley IFN'



Here is the BBC News page. To 'Like' a page as your own page, click the '...' (clicking 'like' will like it as the person you are logged in as)



The 'Page Roles' option on the left lets you assign administrative and other roles to different users.



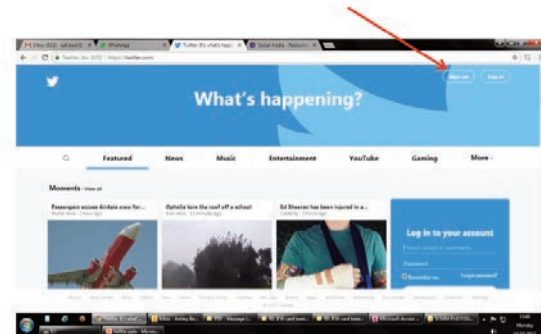
A very brief introduction to using Twitter



Posting a text update is simple. Just type in the box shown below and press 'post'. If you paste in a weblink, it will automatically become clickable. The 'boost post' button allows you to pay to advertise your page.



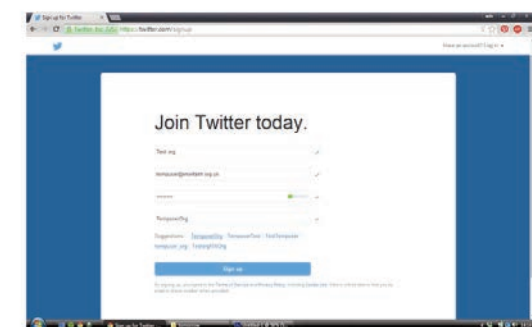
Getting started – www.twitter.com
Click by the arrow to sign up.



Once you click in the box to start writing, it changes and brings up more options. 'Boost' enables you to pay to advertise your post.



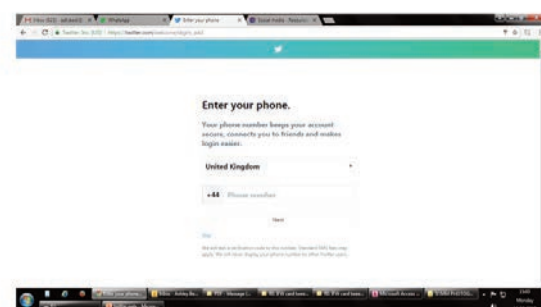
Then you will be taken to this page where you can enter your basic information. I have entered some dummy info below.



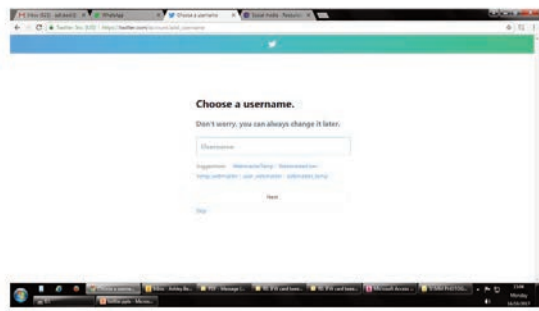
Final points to remember

- Try to pick a name that is easy to find – your organisation's name not an abbreviation.
- When you have over 50 'likes' you can get a custom URL (eg www.facebook.com/ifnetuk)
- Pick a strong password (use a mixture of capitals, lowercase, numbers and symbols. Use something abstract not a word. Pa\$\$w0rd is not very secure because it is just a commonly used word disguised a bit. 39gH4*df! is more secure because it is more random (although it might be harder to remember!))

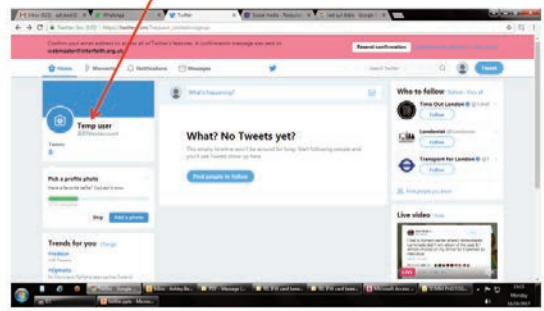
There are a few stages to signing up at the moment. They're all pretty straightforward and contain explanations. This is the first one, which you can skip if you like.



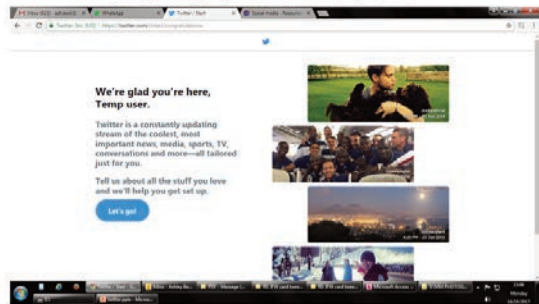
Step 2 lets you choose a username. This should be linked to your organisation name in some way.



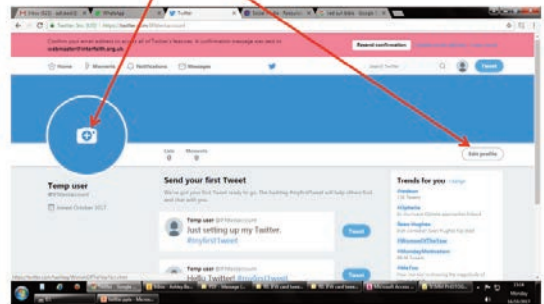
Click your user name to bring up page editing options.



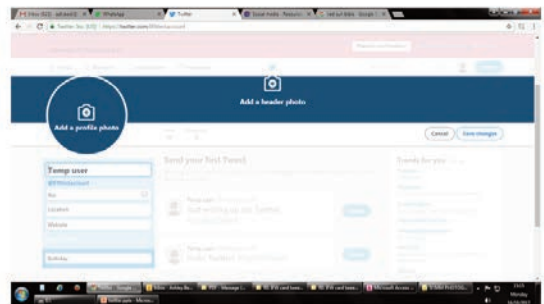
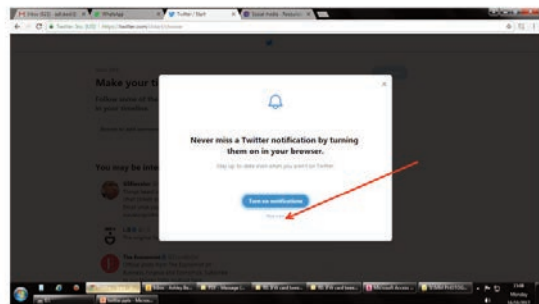
Step 3 doesn't require you to do anything except click 'let's go!' You'll then get some options about your interests, whether you want to import contacts from elsewhere (such as email) and whether you want to follow any famous accounts. I suggest skipping over all of these/ saying 'no'.



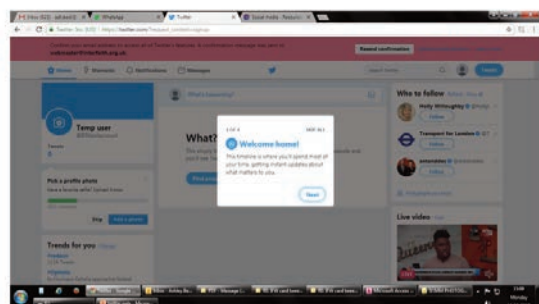
Click the camera in the circle or the 'edit profile' button to get options.



You'll then get asked about browser notifications. Again, I suggest clicking 'not now'.



When you've gone through (or skipped) the steps, you will get to this page. You'll need to confirm your email address (in the red bit at the top of the screen).



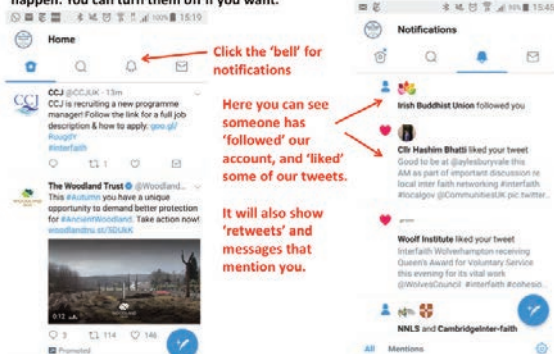
Your Home page shows the latest 'tweets' from accounts you follow.



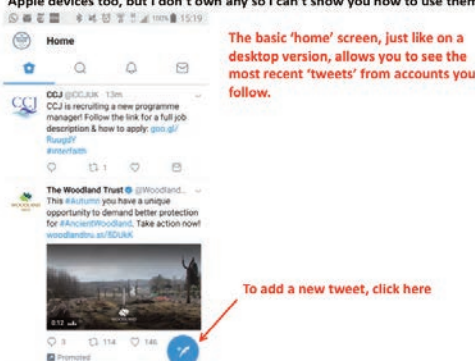
This is what our profile page looks like. It looks pretty much how it will look to others.



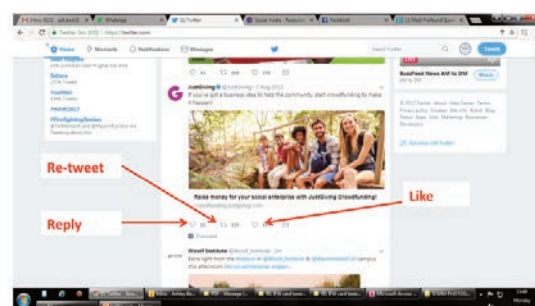
Checking notifications. By default, the Android app will also send you 'push' notifications when things happen. You can turn them off if you want.



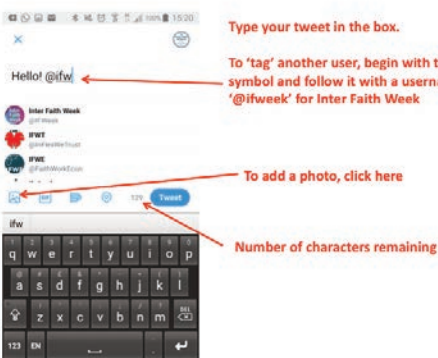
Using the Android app on your smartphone or tablet. (There are similar apps for Apple devices too, but I don't own any so I can't show you how to use them).



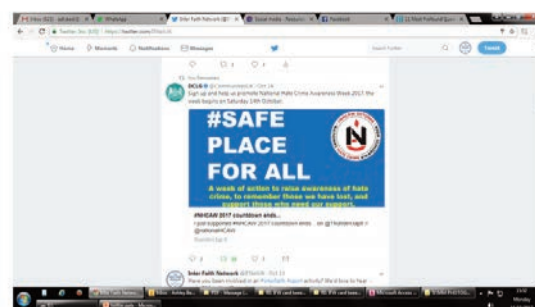
Replying, retweeting and liking



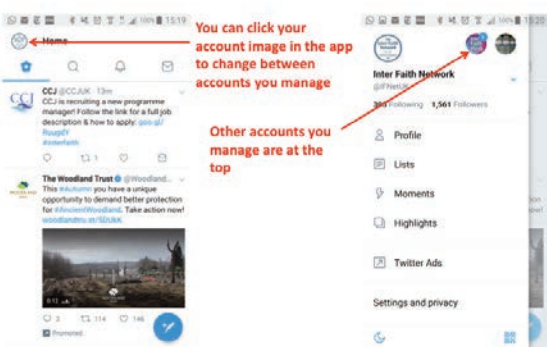
Posting 'tweets'. You only have 140 characters, including spaces!



How retweets look on your profile page



Managing multiple accounts from the app



Final points to remember

- Try to pick a name that is easy to find – your organisation's name not an abbreviation.
- When you have over 50 'likes' you can get a custom URL (eg www.facebook.com/ifnetuk)
- Pick a strong password (use a mixture of capitals, lowercase, numbers and symbols. Use something abstract not a word. Pa\$w0rD is not secure because it is just a commonly used word disguised a bit. 39gH4*df! is an example of a more secure password because it is more random (although it might be harder to remember!))



Participants in workshop discussion

Discussion Group 4: Women and inter faith engagement

There are an increasing number of local inter faith initiatives which have a focus on women's dialogue and cooperation.

This discussion group was facilitated by Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, IFN.

Dr Crabtree welcomed participants to the discussion group. The discussion group was an opportunity to explore a number of aspects of women and inter faith engagement. It would be considering such questions as: How do we ensure women are fully involved in the work of the main inter faith group (if it is a mixed gender group) and part of the programme and part of the decision making process? Is it useful to have gender specific inter faith groups? Are there any drawbacks to this?

It was good that there were both male and female participants in the group as looking at questions of women's inter faith engagement did not involve just women,

just as discussing youth inter faith engagement was not just for young people.

In the discussion that followed these and other questions were explored.

Dr Crabtree began by asking Ms Fakhra Rehman to speak about the development of women's inter faith activity through the former Kirklees Faiths Forum. Ms Rehman noted that:

- South Kirklees is very religiously diverse. North Kirklees is predominantly Christian and Muslim. The Muslim community, of which she is a part, used to be very male dominated. She often found herself the only woman at meetings.
- The 4 people working at Kirklees Faiths Forum (KFF) at the time were women: 1 Christian, 1 Jewish, 1 Muslim and 1 Agnostic.
- She used to see people at meetings and then say hello to them in supermarkets or locally if she saw them. People were surprised by a Muslim female being confident to initiate a conversation in an orthodox Muslim community. Gradually,

the faith communities became more involved and it took a year at least and then Muslim faith leaders began to approach her to start initiatives. Both men and women took part, though often it was the women volunteering and the men at the meetings.

- She organised and met with the female volunteers and asked them to bring along a friend to the group to have a conversation in a safe space where issues that were affecting the women and their participation could be discussed openly. Lots came and discussed the issues.
- The women had many skills and experiences. They wanted to be involved and to help but felt as though they had no voice and were not confident to share their ideas at formal meetings and events. So, KFF provided training called STEPS (Standing Together to Encourage Participation of Sisters). They discussed difficulties, such as childcare, timing of meetings, venues of meetings and then tried to address these by alternating meeting days, times and venues.
- The training provided opportunities for the women to develop new skills and to formulate strategies to become more self-aware and confident to overcome the challenges and barriers that they might be facing. Motivational female speakers were invited who inspired the women and took on the role of mentor to build the women's confidence with civic engagement. For example, they tried to encourage women to become school governors. The local authority was keen on this and so provided free training.
- KFF also set up a Friendship through Faith group which was an action-based project looking at community issues. Women consistently turned up while men did not, so it turned into a women's group. That group was extremely successful and it went on to create subgroups which met

at differing times for various activities and events, including an inter faith book club which, 8 years on, is still meeting. It is no longer just a book club but is now a self-sufficient group involved in many activities including fundraising, exercise classes, gardening and knitting. The women recognise the value of being visible in the community as an inter faith/intercultural group of friends so often go into areas where it is rare to see people of diverse races, cultures and faiths.

- So, it was a group that was set up to bring people from different backgrounds together and there were some initial difficulties, however, these are now being overcome.

Following her reflections, there were a number of questions and comments. Responses from Ms Rehman are included in italics.

- The Women's Inter Faith Forum in Oldham folded because many of the young women involved moved away. However, the group is being re-established and meeting once a week every Tuesday. Many of the women are mature in age. Younger women find it harder to attend because of time commitments.
- The Islington Sisters Group, which involves Christians and Muslims, always meets on weekdays.
There is not one day that is right for everyone. The book club meets on a Thursday once a month. Weekly activities are harder. Other groups, such as the crochet group, meet when it suits them. When the whole group meets the smaller groups bring to it what they've been doing and information from the larger group is always disseminated to the smaller groups. Timings have to be flexible and have to be fixed according to what works for the individuals involved.



Merium Bhuiyan, Islington Faiths Forum

- Birmingham Clifton Road Mosque's inter faith committee now has more women involved than men. How can we encourage men back in again?
Be good at what you do! Get young people involved. Get organisations involved. Form partnerships with schools. Let the media know what you're doing. Show what you're doing well and people will want to get involved.
- Different events can lead local inter faith organisations to become more attractive to different groups.
- Men and women have natural affinities and different relationships. There has to be a recognition of different ways for different times. There is no set way to engage in an inter faith context.

There was also discussion of other examples of the work of women's inter

faith groups and the involvement of women in faith communities.

Nisa Nashim

Nisa Nashim is a national Jewish Muslim women's initiative set up by Ms Laura Marks and Ms Julie Siddiqui.

- Nisa Nashim unites and mobilises Jewish and Muslim women to combat ignorance and misconceptions in communities, and in wider society. It does so by bringing together women from the two communities, locally and nationally, to engage in work with a positive social impact – demonstrating to all that they can live in harmony and contribute to society together. Its aim is to empower women to challenge rising levels of anti-Muslim hatred and anti-Semitism together, through friendship.



The Revd Mark Umpleby, North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council and Grange Williams, Faith Network for Manchester

- Each local Nisa Nashim group has two Co-Chairs: one Jewish and one Muslim. The Manchester group is co-chaired by Mrs Elinor Chohan and Mrs Joanne Feldman who met through an Altrincham Interfaith Group Friendship Circle.
- There is a need to bring the Jewish and Muslim communities together. The group doesn't discuss foreign policy issues. There was a surprising amount of fear of each other before they came together, but the women have similar issues. Both the Jewish and Muslim women come from fairly male-dominated communities. They have found comfort and relaxation in a female environment, getting to know one another. Women are naturally nurturing and engaging and work well to build relationships.
- The Manchester Nisa Nashim group has been able to engage with women who can be harder to reach through inter faith work.

- Holding meetings in their respective places of worship makes people feel comfortable.
- Many of the women involved in the Nisa Nashim group have not engaged with Altrincham Interfaith Group.

East Meets West

- East Meets West was started in 2006 a little after the 7/7 attacks. It was started by a retired Christian teacher and a Muslim lady with a young family. Other faiths did not come on board to the same extent at first but this is changing because of the work with female asylum seekers and refugees. For the first 10 years their activities included embroidery projects, cooking, outings and social events. The Gujarati speaking Muslim community has always been involved. The group has been trying to reach out to Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and others in the area, but they have not come on board. One of the challenges has been to engage some of the women who don't

speaking much English and aren't involved in the community much. Some need interpreters. Some don't have the confidence to speak. Lancaster has a small Asian community but being active on a weekly basis has brought out people from more communities. The confidence of volunteers involved has been boosted because of the service they are offering to the community through hosting the refugee drop in centre for women from all over the world.

Hindu Forum of Britain training for women

- A few years ago the Hindu Forum of Britain, when the General Secretary was Ms Bharti Tailor, set up training sessions to enable Hindu women to become more confident to take part in activities and be on groups and committees. The result was that many women are involved now who would not have been if they had not come through that training. It is of course not just women who benefit from training.

Tooting Christian Muslim Women's Group

- Tooting is a very multicultural area. The Tooting Christian Muslim Women's Group was set up through a member of a local church following her return from a Christian Muslim visit to the Holy Land. It began with a few of her Muslim friends and some Christians from her church, about 6 people in total. It has now been going about 2 years and meets every couple of months. It usually meets in a local Muslim educational centre or a church hall or at a home of one of the group members. Meetings are usually in the evenings and stop for prayer times. When it was set up there was no formal plan as to what type of group it would become. It has evolved into a dialogue/friendship group. Initially conversations were about getting to know one another. The topics of discussions that followed have included:

the role of women in faiths; fasting during faith festivals; how people of faith are seen in today's society; and a refugee project with which one participant is involved. There has also been a visit to a local synagogue through the local Nisa Nashim group.

- There is a core group who attend most meetings and others who come and go depending on availability, timings and childcare. The group has decided to remain women-only as the participants feel that their dialogue and behaviour would change if men were involved.

Faith Network for Manchester

- The Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M) helped the Sacred Sounds Choir to get together. It has about 70 women from different faiths singing together. There is a lot of discussion about which songs to sing, and about their content and how it relates to faith and understanding of theology. It opens up real dialogue about how people of faith get on with each other.
- FN4M has a number of dialogue groups, usually of mixed gender. Some have co-leadership by a male and a female. That works well.

Women's World Day of Prayer

- The Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP) has been trying to get young people involved. There is a 'Why Pray' weekend for young women taking place next March. WWDP has been asking young women about their interests and challenges and has found the answers very different to those from 20 to 30 years ago. For example, they wanted services to be held in the evening and to bring their children (which works if they take their shoes off and can run around quietly) and wanted a 'chill weekend' with relaxation activities. It's good to ask people what they really want. There is a vote next year

to make it the World Day of Prayer to involve men as well.

Bolton Interfaith Council

- In inter faith terms, in order to make a difference to society as a whole, women need to take part and be at the forefront. For many reasons, they are often not able to take part. Bolton Interfaith Council (BIC) has tried to set up a women's group but has not been able to because of resources. However, BIC supports half a dozen women's groups, many of individual faiths. The Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors are now only females. Women have a large role to play in trust building.

York Interfaith

- Men and women take part equally in York Interfaith, but it has become a largely older group. It is considering how to start a different variety of meetings including at different times of day in order that young women with children can get involved.

In general discussion the following points were also made:

- Accessibility for young people and both genders is important to local inter faith groups. Older people are on the whole freer to do activities.
- One of the positive aspects of women's groups is the involvement of children. However, that can draw a line between those with children and those without. It is important not to conflate family responsibilities – important as these are – with the role of women and to look at how all meetings work well for women whether or not they have children or families.
- Some say that women are somehow better than men at dialogue and are more hospitable. Both are, although their approaches may differ. Men and women

may be comfortable in different contexts and are likely to flourish more when they are comfortable. It is important, though, not to stereotype.

- A male participant said that in his experience, travelling across the world, women are good at engaging with one another quite quickly and on a deeper level than men. It can sometimes take men longer to get beyond safe discussions on, for example, work.
- How can a mixed gender local inter faith group work to ensure good interaction and involvement of men and women? An example was offered of arranging for everyone to bring vegetarian food and to cook on camp stoves, pairing people up. Younger people could join in. The idea came from Manchester International Festival. It is a really good idea. It breaks down barriers on lots of fronts. The idea is to share cooking skills. Any community based activity helps to break down barriers, for example volunteering in green spaces, in parks. Neighbourhoods are doing that anyway, so encourage women to get involved, as it's their neighbourhood.
- Women getting together is a powerful means for change. The participant had recently attended a women's peace meeting where women spent 2 nights on a residential together, discussing and sharing both fears and ideas for the future and what they could do together.
- In Blackburn with Darwen there was capacity building through a 12 week programme of leadership skills. It was through this that women got involved with smaller groups. It was an excellent catalyst. Those ladies are still doing work in the community 4 years later. Training and capacity building are important.

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

- 10.45am** **Registration and refreshments**
- 11.00am** **Opening of the morning session, welcome and setting the context for the day from the Chair, Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chair Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN)**
- Welcome to Manchester from the Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi** on behalf of the Faith Network 4 Manchester
- 11.15am** **Responding to terrorism, extremism and hatred**
- Local inter faith organisations play a vital role in responding to terrorism, extremism and hatred in the communities that they represent.
- Rabbi Warren Elf**, Community Development Worker, Faith Network 4 Manchester, reflects on faith communities' responses in Manchester to recent attacks, notably the Manchester Arena terror attack in May.
- Plenary discussion about how we respond as local initiatives.**
- 11.35am** **Dialogue on the spot**
- A chance to talk with your neighbours
- 11.40am** **Conversations in friendly spaces**
- Many of our inter faith dialogues take place in meetings or in public spaces. Sometimes, however, small group discussions in more private spaces are particularly important in building long term relationships of trust.
- Elinor Chohan** of Altrincham Interfaith Group (AIG) and Altrincham Muslim Association talks about the ways in which AIG's friendship groups have been so important to the development of its work and of inter faith relationships locally.
- 12.00pm** **Discussion Groups**
- 1) Supporting RE and inter faith engagement in schools**
Exploring how local inter faith bodies do, and can, work with schools and SACREs on supporting religious education in the curriculum.
Facilitator: David Hampshire, Assistant Director, IFN, and former teacher and RE Advisor
Opening presentation from Alison Bradley, Liverpool Community Spirit.

She will talk about its schools work and in particular about Home of Hospitality – where students experience a living room of faith with a traditional welcome from a faith representative, learn greetings and experience hospitality traditions.

2) Developing programmes with impact Facilitator: Dr Harriet Crabtree,
Executive Director, IFN

This workshop will explore some of the factors that groups have identified as helping their work have impact – and also look at some of the day to day challenges of sustaining and developing local inter faith initiatives.

It will also include:

an input about local inter faith and faith community engagement with local authorities from Chirag Khajuria of Blackpool Faith Forum which has recently launched a 'Faith Agreement' with the local authority; and a chance to offer suggestions to assist in revision of The Local Inter Faith Guide being taken forward by IFN.

<https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/the-local-inter-faith-guide-faith-community-co-operation-in-action-second-e>

1.00pm Lunch

A vegetarian lunch will be provided.

1.50pm Discussion Groups

3) Getting to grips with Facebook and Twitter!

Facilitator: Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, IFN, with responsibility for IFN's social media.

A chance to learn how to set up and use Facebook and Twitter and to maximise impact.

4) Women and inter faith engagement

There are an increasing number of local inter faith initiatives which have a focus on women's dialogue and cooperation.

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

Opening reflections from Fakhra Rehman, North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council, about the development of women's inter faith activity through the former Kirklees Faiths Forum, followed by inputs about a number of women's inter faith initiatives and general discussion on the topic.

2.50pm Feedback from discussion groups

3.05pm Inter Faith Week and other special days and weeks – a platform for cooperation and outreach

Inter Faith Week 2017 takes place from 12–19 November. How do/can groups use IFW programmes and other special days/Weeks as platforms to increase visibility and engagement and serve their local community?

Dr Peter Rookes and Kathryn Azarpay, Birmingham Council of Faiths share their experience

3.20pm Bringing young people together locally for inter faith encounter

Local inter faith organisations often have a role in bringing young people of different faiths together in their communities, and many have expressed a desire for this engagement to grow. As IFN begins a new programme of work on youth inter faith engagement, including an updated and expanded edition of the Connect guide, we hear from Ashley Beck, IFN's Inter Faith Development Worker, who will be leading for IFN on this and from one local organisation, Bolton Interfaith Council, with special focus on this and discuss ideas for strengthening local inter faith engagement with youth people and vice versa.

Chan Parmar, Development Officer Bolton Interfaith Council and **Puja Solanki**, Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassador, present on the work of the Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors Forum.

Discussion

3.40 pm Closing reflections

Sister Patricia Harriss, York Inter Faith Group

Chirag Khajuria, Blackpool Faith Foun

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

3.55 pm Closing words from the Chair

4.00 pm Close

PARTICIPANTS

One or more representatives from the following local inter faith groups and organisations were present at the meeting:

Altrincham Interfaith Group	Lancashire Forum of Faiths
Birmingham Council of Faiths	Liverpool Community Spirit
Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum	Moseley Inter Faith Forum
Blackpool Faith Forum	Newport Interfaith Group
Bolton Interfaith Council	Nisa-Nashim Manchester
Chesterfield Interfaith Group	North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council
Dudley Borough Interfaith Network	Oldham Interfaith Forum
East Meets West – Women Together in Lancaster	Stockport Interfaith Group
Faith Network for Manchester	Wakefield Interfaith Group
Greater Manchester Interfaith Network	Warwick District Faiths Forum
Islington Faiths Forum	West Cheshire Interfaith Forum
	York Interfaith Group

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

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

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

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

REMEMBERING A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

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

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

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

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

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

Thank You!

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) works to promote understanding, cooperation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths in the UK. It 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 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
- 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

A key programme of IFN is Inter Faith Week which takes place in November each year and which

- highlights the good work done by local faith, inter faith and faith-based groups and organisations
- draws new people into inter faith learning and cooperation
- enables greater interaction between people of different backgrounds
- helps develop integrated and neighbourly communities
- celebrates diversity and commonality

For more information about IFN, visit www.interfaith.org.uk. For Inter Faith Week visit www.interfaithweek.org The 2018 Week takes place from 11–18 November.

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



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Front cover photographs (top to bottom):
Alison Bradley, Liverpool Community Spirit; Rupa Shah Flynn and the Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi, Faith Network for Manchester; Puja Solanki and Chan Parmar, Bolton Interfaith Council and Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors; Rabbi Warren Elf, Faith Network for Manchester; Dr Peter Rookes, Birmingham Council of Faiths; Merium Bhuiyan, Islington Faiths Forum; and Sukhbir Singh, Faith Network for Manchester; Fakhra Rehman and the Revd Mark Umpleby, North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council

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