



Inter Faith Network day event for local inter faith practitioners

A SHORT REPORT

Thursday 28 July 2016

The Welcome Centre, Coventry



About the day

On 28 July 2016, practitioners from a wide range of local inter faith groups from different parts of the UK came together in Coventry for a day of learning and sharing held by the Inter Faith Network for the UK. This followed on from similar events held in Sheffield and London in 2015.

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

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

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



Mehru Fitter MBE, Coventry Multi Faith Forum



The Revd Canon Dr John Hall, Devon Faith and Belief Forum, during plenary discussion

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

The event was facilitated by Dr Harriet Crabtree who noted in her opening remarks that it was a timely moment to reflect on the importance of inter faith work. The day was an opportunity to share good practice across the UK, to ask questions and to talk about issues of common interest and concern. She welcomed participants on behalf of the Inter Faith Network for the UK.

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.

Participants were then given a welcome to Coventry by Ms Mehru Fitter MBE of Coventry Multi Faith Forum. She described Coventry as a centre of peace and reconciliation. It has two universities which encourage their student populations to engage with local communities and an excellent track record for cordial inter faith relations. One of the core values of Coventry City Council is the celebration of diversity. The city is proud of its heritage but also believes in a fusion of old and new.

Morning session

Local inter faith organisations: a vital resource in our communities

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

Bishop Atkinson made the following points

- The previous week he had attended a powerful and inspiring launch event for FACES – Faiths Against Child Sexual Exploitation. It was an example of local people from across faith communities coming together to address an issue of significance and concern across society. It was a local initiative doing what local groups do best – building on relationships that had been formed and being able to have conversations from a position of friendship and trust about a

significant topic that was hard to discuss. It led to a desire to respond that drew in others, such as experts from the local university and politicians.

- An enormous amount of work is done by local inter faith groups across the UK. Work with local inter faith groups is one of the Inter Faith Network's great strengths.
- There are over 250 local inter faith groups across the UK which include a variety of models. The local groups in his own area of Bedford and Luton are very different in their approaches.

He offered the following 7 'marks' of local inter faith work, which he knew those present would recognise:

- **Building Neighbourly Communities**
This is a simple task of building relationships and friendships across faiths, being welcoming and hospitable,



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



Participants in conversation during plenary

engaging in dialogue and creating opportunities to ask questions.

- **Envisioning**

This is building a shared vision of a common good, shared values and about being honest about where there is agreement and disagreement.

- **Promoting understanding and raising awareness**

This includes Religious Literacy, a topic that IFN's Faith Communities Forum (a form of National Faith Community Representative Bodies) discussed at its June meeting. It involves promoting understanding in talks, exhibitions, school visits, guided tours of places of worship and so forth.

- **Witness**

There are times when it is important to be seen together. The visual images of faith leaders coming together following the recent sad events in France were very powerful. This was a witness of unity, creating a positive narrative.

- **Solidarity**

Strong relationships can build resilience. There have been different strongly held

views about the EU Referendum but, in Luton for example, local relationships have given a resilience to community life.

- **Social action and social issues**

There is a range of positive social action taken at local level. It is so much better when communities work together.

- **Modelling good relations**

This relates to modelling good relationships in society, particularly relationships between faith communities which model how the hard questions can be discussed and people can live with difference.

He noted that it is a time when there are many issues of concern:

- One of these is the reports of an increase in hate crime. It has been encouraging that faith communities are working together to find ways to affirm common bonds, such as the Love Your Neighbour initiative in Birmingham. In Luton and Bedford people have simply come together, drawing in others beyond faith communities, speaking powerfully of the sort of society that is desirable.

He also offered a few closing reflections, including on the Inter Faith Network's recent review of governance:

- IFN's membership had changed and so it was necessary to amend its governance. It is important to ensure that governance is right.
- Inter faith work in the UK is about people of faith sharing values, learning together and working for the common good of the country. IFN is focused on that.
- A vital part of IFN's work, right at its heart, is the contribution of local inter faith groups, as well as projects such as Inter Faith Week
- He hoped that the day would enable people to share experiences, learn from one another and build together.

The following comment was offered. Bishop Atkinson's response is included.

- Liaison with local authorities and public bodies is important. In some areas local authorities had actually set up local inter faith structures in order to engage. Such groups had often resulted in faith groups building good relationships with local authorities enabling them to have an input on many issues, such as local planning permissions. More people gather for worship each week than go to football matches!
It is very good to engage with bodies, such as local authorities, as the FACES initiative in Luton had done.

In discussion the following points were made. Dr Crabtree's response to one of these is included.

- Those living in the North of England were often very aware of how London-centric some organisations were, especially if they only had an office base in London. Perhaps IFN could consider having a

satellite office in the North of England. Preston would be able to help!

This is an important point. As someone who had grown up herself mainly in the North of England she was very conscious of the dangers of 'London-centricness'. Many years ago IFN had explored the possibility of having an office outside of London, possibly in the North of England. The practicalities of cost were one of the reasons for having only one office. IFN holds a number of its meetings in other parts of the UK, such as Bristol, Cardiff, and Leeds. IFN was grateful to Preston for hosting one of its local link meetings in 2014.

- It is very important to understand and focus on the insecurity felt by people who come from different parts of the world as a consequence of the outcome of the EU Referendum.
- The scale of the increase in hate crime following the outcome of the EU Referendum had been very surprising and showed how much needed to be done in this area.

Looking after one another

Narendra Waghela, Leicester Council of Faiths and IFN Trustee

Mr Waghela began by noting that the 2011 Census showed that the BME community in Leicester now outnumbered the 'host community' and Leicester is therefore the first city in the UK where the BME community is in a majority.

He offered the following reflections on the days following the outcome of the EU Referendum:

- The 'Brexit' campaigns had been very lively.

- The result of the EU Referendum was a shock, but many faith communities had united directly following it.
 - On the morning of 28 June, Radio Leicester interviewed Bishop Martyn Snow of Leicester who had spoken about “the need for a clear and united voice within our communities following the Brexit vote”. Bishop Martyn stated that “as the levels of hate crime rise, the economic signs look bad and there is an urgent need to work together in this new situation for the wellbeing of our people”. On the same day he published an open letter in the media, which was signed and supported by many faith communities and leaders in Leicestershire, the City Mayor, the Police Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable of Police and local councillors.
(www.leicestermercury.co.uk/eu-referendum-divisions-addressed-at-stand-together-event-where-remain-and-leave-voters-united/story-29454426-detail/story.html)
 - On 29 and 30 June the Leicester Council of Faiths wrote to the Police Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Police and arranged a meeting to discuss the reporting and stopping of the rise in hate crime.
 - On the morning of 2 July the Vice-Chair and Secretary of Leicester Council of Faiths were interviewed by the BBC to discuss the message of peace, solidarity and tolerance.
 - Leicester Council of Faiths then organised a ‘We are together’ vigil at Jubilee Square in Leicester. This was well attended by faith communities, leaders, the City Mayor, Assistant Mayors,
- Police, Local Councillors and a large number of the public.
- While the Police were working hard to record incidents and maintain peace in certain areas of Leicester, it was suggested by some faith organisations that a number of their members were too shy to report incidents to the Police directly. They therefore suggested that people who felt this way report incidents to their place of worship who in turn would then report the incidents to the Police. The Police thought this idea was helpful and encouraged faith communities to assist in this way.
 - On the evening of 12 July the St Philip’s Centre hosted an event to discuss the following questions:
 - What is a hate crime and how can it be tackled?
 - What can the Police do?
 - What can the Police not do?
 - What support is there for the victims of hate crime?
 - What can we do together?



Narendra Waghela, Leicester Council of Faiths and Trustee, IFN

- The St Philip's Centre event was attended by many faith community members, leaders, the Police Crime Commissioner, Probation Officers and a large number of the public. The discussions lasted over two hours and many suggestions were made to bring the community together. The sale of safety pins went up in support of the campaign to wear safety pins in solidarity with immigrants.
- Leicester Council of Faiths is proud to be part of a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in society and these are condemned by people across Leicestershire. The common message since the EU Referendum result has been that immigration is healthy and that immigrants help to build the economy and society.
- Organisations like Leicester Council of Faiths, many local inter faith organisations throughout the UK and the Inter Faith Network for the UK, have worked relentlessly for around 30 years to bring people together to help maintain peace, tolerance and harmony. Those efforts should not be wasted. The Government should do its job but faith communities and inter faith

organisations should also continue to play a part.

Sally Sealey OBE, Senior Policy Adviser on Hate Crime, Integration and Faith Directorate, Department for Communities and Local Government

- Ms Sealey offered the following reflections:
 - Today's discussion is timely, it comes at a time when there has been an unprecedented level of hate crime since the EU referendum, although levels reached in the initial weeks have now dropped back to the figures prior to the vote.
 - Sadly, it would seem that the decision to leave the EU has emboldened people who carry hatred and prejudice in their hearts.
 - The Government has been very clear, that one hate crime is too many and those caught perpetuating hate crime will face the full force of the law.
 - It also comes at a time where there have been atrocious attacks across the world which strike at the very heart of who we are.
 - The Government published its Hate Crime Action Plan earlier in July.
 - The plan focuses on three main areas:
 - Prevention
 - Increased reporting
 - Better service to victims
 - It also highlights areas where more needs to be done, this includes:
 - Social Media



Sally Sealey OBE, Department for Communities and Local Government

- Public Transport
- Women
- Night Time Economy
- The focus of this talk is on how local inter faith groups can work to tackle tensions and hate crime and dispel prejudice and encourage positive interaction.
- This is the very space that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) occupies – it is interested in preventing hate crime before it happens.
- This means supporting projects/initiatives which educate and encourage people of different backgrounds/faiths to get to know each other. DCLG firmly believes that if people get to know other people who are from different backgrounds, faiths or no faith, they are less likely to perpetrate hate crime.
- It also knows that young people are the main victims and perpetrators of hate crime so there is a need to focus on them.
- Faith and inter faith initiatives are key to this.
- It is the daily interactions that make a difference – such as a kind word here or a gesture there. It is also good solid education about core values, which run like a thread through all major faiths and movements.
- It is about outreach. It is about not being afraid. It is about standing up for what you believe in and it is about standing together.
- Up and down the country there are faith, inter faith and community initiatives, some large, some small. There is a need to build on those.
- It is about when major events occur; in times of crises –standing together, ie being united in condemning all forms of hatred and prejudice.
- If one challenges anti-Muslim hatred, one should equally challenge hatred against Christians, Sikhs, Hindus or Jews.
- If a person cannot condemn all forms of hate crime then they are part of the problem and not the solution.
- There is no hierarchy of hate crime – whether it comes from the left or the right of politics it needs to be condemned.
- Faith institutions and inter faith work are uniquely placed. Those involved are at the coalface and can through their actions and engagement change attitudes.
- If anyone hears about or witnesses hate crime or is a victim they need to report it.
- Even if the perpetrator is unknown it can be reported to True Vision. The person reporting the crime can remain anonymous but the information given could be useful to the police to detect patterns or hot spot areas for hate crime or incidents.
- There are many people who don't know what constitutes hate crime – it does include people using abusive language, spitting and shoving.
- Hate crime is a most pernicious crime; it goes to the heart of who we are, our very essence of what defines us.
- That is why it is important to report it. And why it is important to have zero tolerance towards people who feel Brexit and other atrocities across the world give them license to perpetrate and encourage hatred and prejudice!

- The media has a role to play, and there have been many complaints but if people see something which they feel crosses the line – they should report it to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

but positive messages do have a greater impact over time.

The following questions and comments were offered. Ms Sealey's responses are in italics.

- Many of the reports that cause anger and distress often contain inaccuracies and so it is important to report those inaccuracies. Inaccurate reporting is most likely to result in newspapers taking action.
- Social media is awash with negative stories, but it is also a force for good. There were a number of positive hashtags following the EU referendum vote. It is worth noting that the top 10 most successful tweets worldwide are positive and relate to a famous boy band!
- It is easier to deal with illegal content as major IT companies recently agreed to take down illegal content within 24 hours.
- What is more difficult is the material, which is the vast majority that comes to DCLG's attention, which is unpleasant, unsavoury- but not illegal.
- What can be done about this type of material?
- One idea is to engage in counter narrative work – challenging those that spread hatred and intolerance. There are a number of initiatives in this space and it is a really good way for young people to challenge their peers.
- A second response, it to ensure that when we search topics using search engines that the positive stories come to the top.
- Everyone participating in today's event has an important role in this space ensuring that they flood this space with positive messages. Negative messages may be the big talking point of the day
- The speaker was from Birmingham where many of the Love Your Neighbour groups had been set up. He had recently spoken at one of these events. He had felt that he was doing very little, but it was very important to work at the grassroots. It is very important to listen to one another, especially to those with whom you disagree or don't know. Political education is very important. The UK has a parliamentary democracy but if faith communities don't work that out within their own places of worship then the context is not being provided in which people can work for good inter faith relations.
- When people drink and drive they get points on their driving licence. Is there any way that there could be a similar system for hate crime offences, such as a citizen's passport?
A points system is an interesting idea to consider, but it might be seen as down-playing hate crime. The Government believes that people who commit hate crime should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Restorative Justice programmes are also in use in many places. For instance, where graves are desecrated, is it more useful to fine the perpetrators or to get them to meet the families involved and understand what it means to them?
- Reporting of hate crime is very mixed. There is no one organisation with its finger on the pulse because the reporting sites are not all inter-linked. What plans are there within Government to have one central location for reporting hate crime so that the true picture can be seen?
Tell MAMA and the Community Security



Dina Mandalia, Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group, during plenary discussion

Trust do now feed their statistics into the True Vision site. The issue is about trying to ensure that all the data is gathered. There are sharing agreements in place with organisations such as Stonewall and the Police, so the Government is trying to get an overall picture. It is hoped that all crimes will be reported to True Vision.

- Hate crime is a symptom. The root cause is that a whole part of society is disenfranchised and disenchanted. When you are experiencing poverty and a lack of employment it is much easier to kick vulnerable people in society rather than the Government or bankers. It's important to deal with the root cause. (The speaker works in the centre of Birmingham which is multicultural but lives in an area which is mainly White and where there is a high level of unemployment due to the closure of Longbridge.)

The situation described can be a cause of hate crime but hate crime is not just about that. Hate crime existed long before the result of the EU Referendum. There is a cohort of people that are just that way inclined and will be so, no matter what education is provided. It is well understood that unemployment can lead to people

being disenfranchised, but the problem of hate crime is much wider.

- With regard to Prevent, where is the joined up thinking in terms of the cuts in services for youth workers, health visitors, Sure Start and so forth? Is there going to be any funding at all for inter faith activities? Government always says how good inter faith work is but doesn't always provide resourcing to do better.

The Government of the day is responsible for funding services, rather than the civil service.

- Is there a selective definition of hate crime? Eastern Orthodox Christian women cover their heads customarily but crimes against them aren't recorded because they're not Muslim. If a church is broken into, the police normally provide a crime number but often don't come to investigate.

The basic definition of hate crime is that if the victim thinks it's a hate crime then it's a hate crime. It is very broad.

The example given of Eastern Orthodox Christian women in headscarves being attacked is a hate crime and should be reported as such.

- The result of the EU Referendum has been a game-changer in that whole sections of society suddenly feel isolated. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, had recently said that isolationism is in danger of becoming the new orthodoxy. That is a great driver for hate crime. What are your thoughts? *It is right that there are many communities that feel isolated. Refugees coming into communities where no work has been done to prepare for them can certainly feel isolated. Government Departments are working together on this. It's important, for example, to educate the host community.*

Serving Together – Mohamed Omar

Mr Omar said that he was originally from Somalia and now lived in Glasgow. He was glad to be attending and looked forward to meeting other participants during the day. In his presentation he noted the following points:

- Interfaith Glasgow (IG) had become an independent charity in 2016. Prior to that it had been a project of Interfaith Scotland (IFS), an inter faith umbrella body.
- IG's work includes high profile events during Inter Faith Week, networking events and work with young people for which they try to be as innovative as possible.
- There are three parts to its Engagement Strategy: Friendship building, which includes networking events; Dialogue, which is centred on scriptural reasoning in universities, particularly Abrahamic texts; and Cooperation on common issues, such as working to link places of worship on projects to tackle societal issues.
- The Weekend Club is a new project of IG to support asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants in Scotland who feel isolated at the weekend. This initiative is also designed to provide a platform for people from different faith and belief communities to address collaboratively an issue of shared concern.
- IG carried out research into the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants in Glasgow and what had been said about these:
 - In 2014 the Scottish Government produced a strategy entitled '*New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities 2014-2017*'. The strategy was created in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.
 - One of the key aims was that asylum seekers and refugees should become active members of communities with strong social relationships.
 - Scottish Refugee Council research also showed that women felt very isolated at the weekend because they were



Mohammed Omar, Interfaith Glasgow



Frame from a video shown as part of this presentation (Credit: Interfaith Glasgow)

- unable to attend events due to a lack of childcare.
- The Maryhill Integration Network showed that there was a gap in service provision at the weekend.
- The West of Scotland Regional Equality Council noted that it was helpful for faith communities to volunteer to enable new Scots to build relationships and learn about diversity. Diversity is seen as an asset in Glasgow.
- Setting up the Weekend Club was a large task. He began by putting out a call for volunteers from different faith and belief communities. He had been very impressed by the responses he received, including interest from England.
- In-house trainers provided training to the volunteers on issues relevant to asylum seekers and refugees as well as on inter faith interaction.
- IG is very mindful of the need not to proselytise, particularly as it is working with vulnerable adults.
- He holds planning meetings with volunteers every month and there is one Weekend Club event every month. 12 events have been held since September 2015.
- Participants from all over the world have attended the events, which are designed to help tackle isolation and to highlight Scottish history and culture, as well as increasing interaction between the asylum seekers and refugees and volunteers in the area. As many of the participants do not have English as their first language, a lot of symbols and pictures are used.
- IG has many supporters, including the Allen Lane Foundation, Faith in Scotland Community Action Fund, Endrick Trust, Hugh Fraser Foundation and Commonwealth Fund.

To finish his presentation Mr Omar showed a video presentation about the Weekend Club. This can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFfGl8cYWWM.

Afternoon session

Reflections from workshops

A: Working for united communities – tackling prejudice, tensions and hate crime

- There seems to be a divide between formal and informal inter faith relations. It's important to remember that informal relations are about building relationships on a human level, such as around food and culture. Formal dialogue is also important and there is a need to be aware of the language used.

B: Working in partnership for the common good

- If there is a continuing decline in the acceptance of established faiths and of authority, this may affect the future of inter faith relations.

- Personal enthusiasm is key to inter faith engagement.
- Partnership working is changing. It's good to be flexible and to work together with people, rather than being directive.
- Networking is vital and the net needs to be widened to include the whole community.

C: Social media – tips and pointers for using it successfully

- Don't be afraid!
- Keep at it – once you've set up a social media page, make sure it's kept up to date with your events and activities.
- It can be better to do fewer events and to communicate better about them.



Participants in conversation during plenary discussion

D: Religious literacy

- Religious Literacy is very difficult to define.
- Religion and culture are so intertwined it is difficult to separate them.
- We should strive to understand culture at the same time as understanding faith.
- There is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' religion.
- It's important to affirm one's own faith in order to be able to share it with others and build community.

E: Change and opportunity

- There have been many changes in the operating environment.
- It can be challenging to engage new people and, in particular, young people, but there are good examples of this working. Social media can be helpful. It is also important to draw on the experience of those who have been involved in inter faith relations for longer.



Pat Stevens, Harrow Interfaith and
Ustadh Adam Aslam, Leeds Concord
Interfaith Fellowship



Laurie Burrow, Rugby Inter Faith
Forum

F: Funding and resourcing our work

- Although there have been funding cuts in many areas, there are still plenty of organisations to approach for funding, such as corporate bodies, and other ways of raising money.
- Don't be despondent. Go out in faith and find funding!

General reflections

- The Weekend Club project is an inspiration and it is great to see young people involved.

Reaching out and growing involvement – Rabbi Dr Robert Ash

Dr Crabtree thanked Rabbi Ash for stepping in at short notice to make a presentation on Preston Faiths Forum (PFF), as it had not been possible, in the event, for presenters from York Interfaith Group to attend.

PFF Chairman Jeremy Dable addressing Preston's Nagar Kirtan, May 2016



One of the slides used as part of this presentation (Credit: Savannah Dable)

In his presentation he noted the following points:

- Preston Faiths Forum's Chair, Mr Jeremy Dable, was sorry not to have been able to attend. He had contributed to the presentation in advance.
- Preston has a diverse population and the Faith Forum began in 2003 in order to bring some of them together.
- PFF has always had the full support of Preston City Council. The Leader of the Council is still a Trustee of PFF.
- PFF runs a programme of events during the year, some of which focus on faith festivals, such as the *Nagar Kirtan* (processional singing which usually takes place in the Sikh community during *Vaisakhi*). It also organises Faith Trails round local places of worship and communities (for which the City Council provides transport); undertakes school visits; and takes part in the Preston Guild, having its own float last time.
- PFF always tries to produce a full programme of events for Inter Faith Week. In 2015 the following took place:
 - Workshop for women of all faiths with focus on well-being.
 - Faith Trail: Tour of Places of Worship in Preston.
 - Social Media Workshop: How to use Facebook and Twitter.
 - Concert to raise money for the Red Cross for Syrian Crisis appeal.
 - Chaplaincy For All: Full-day event with Lancashire Constabulary.
 - What is Prayer? Christian and Muslim Perspectives.
 - Scriptural Reasoning: Jewish and Muslim texts on religion and law.
 - Food and Fellowship: Exploring ways to build relationships.



Rabbi Dr Robert Ash, Preston Faiths Forum

- One of the best ways to build relationships is around food, so PFF held a small food festival.
- Inter Faith Week is springboard for other events during the year.
- PFF has lost a lot of its funding from the City Council and is now therefore focusing on being a grass roots membership organisation aimed at individuals rather than institutions. Social action has been pushed to the forefront of its work.
- Some members of PFF have made four trips to camps in Calais and are soon to make a fifth. It is important to research the situation and take what is actually needed (such as socks and fire wood). The trips have received a lot of media attention and the act of people from different faiths taking part has made an impact. In a way, it helped PFF as much as it helped the refugees.
- In February this year the English Defence League held a demonstration in Preston. A number of communities issued a Unity Statement rejecting the EDL and its views. Some of the Muslim community invited the EDL to have a meal with them, but the offer was turned down. This offer was reported by media throughout the world.
- The Light Foundation is an active young Muslim group which holds discussions attended by people of all faiths. It is often popular which is very encouraging.
- Another example of a PFF event involved a local imam and local Methodist minister discussing 'Do we worship the same God?' Their key message was that we are all human beings.
- It is important to think of everyone as one community, with different identities.
- There is a very active women's inter faith scene in Preston so last year's programme included a workshop just for women.
- The Faith Trails were very popular.
- The Social Media Workshop was about increasing outreach.
- A concert had been held to raise money for those affected by the crisis in Syria.
- A full day event was organised with the police to train people in chaplaincy skills.
- There was a theological discussion on the theme of 'What is prayer?'
- Scriptural reasoning can be a very sensitive activity. PFF began by exploring what Islam and Judaism say about the relationship between religion and the law.

- The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day this year was 'Do not stand by'. The Chair of PFF had written to say that Preston stood ready to take refugees from Calais when the camp closed.
- PFF continues to build links with schools and universities.
- PFF has also held events to take action against intolerance. An example of this is the civic *tashlikh* held earlier in the year. A *tashlikh* is a Jewish ritual that takes place around New Year when Jewish people throw breadcrumbs into a body of water as symbols of faults and sins. A civic *tashlikh* was held with people of all faiths, which was a very symbolic act.
- It had been a very rich day. He had learned a lot about both the variety and commonality in the work of local inter faith organisations.
- He had learned some other interesting facts, learning for example about a European Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow.
- Mohammed Omar had spoken of 'meeting the world'. This seemed to be very significant for the situation post-Brexit. The Faith Network for Manchester had just carried out some research about the concerns of local communities. It was carried out in 2015 but it now read like a Brexit result. There was a real mix of those who felt positive about diversity and those who felt reluctant to accept it.

In response to a question about how PFF had changed its constitution following the loss of funding, Rabbi Ash said that its membership rules had been re-written to clarify and expand membership to include individuals. PFF had focused on recruiting people and was building a healthy financial position, again through individual gifts and donations. PFF has a track record on social action which helped people to engage. PFF is taking the lead in trying to establish a chapter of Citizens UK. This is going to take time. For some religious organisations social action is being seen as a way both to help others and also to stem the outflow of members. PFF has tried to keep both the dialogue and learning element as well as social action.

Reflections on the themes of the day – the Revd Andy Williams

Mr Williams said that he had greatly enjoyed the day – great food, great venue, great people! He was about to move from Lancashire to Yorkshire and it was good to have met some participants from Leeds.



The Revd Andy Williams, Faith Network for Manchester



Sean Finlay, Wisbech Interfaith Forum



Participants in workshop discussion

- Although bad news usually only lasts a couple of days, some of the recent world events may last longer. However, his strong feeling was that good news would be the more enduring.

He thanked everyone at IFN for facilitating a rich and inspiring day.

Reflections on the themes of the day – Sean Finlay

- Mr Finlay said that he had begun the day with a feeling of anger and bewilderment and ambivalence at what was going on in the world. This was a feeling shared by a friend with whom he had attended a mass in memory of Fr Jacques Hamel the previous evening. But he also had a feeling of hope.



Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi, Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship

- His local paper had run a front page article entitled 'United Against Hate' which included reference to Wisbech Interfaith Forum. However, they had not been in touch with the Forum about it. The article claimed that the Forum would be discussing ways 'to drive cohesion and inclusion across the whole district'. He had contacted the local council and local police force to point out that they should be leading in this area. This was an example of the impact of the media.
- He had begun the day feeling like a boat in the middle of the sea – ready to have a go but quite nervous. During the day in plenary and in the workshop on change it was heartening to hear the contributions of young people and to hear about all the good work that is going on across the UK. It is encouraging to put oars in the water and see which shore is reached.

He thanked everyone at IFN for arranging the day.

Reflections on the themes of the day – Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi

Ms Mehmi thanked IFN for hosting such an enjoyable and useful day and offered the following reflections:

- The rise in hate crime following the result of the EU Referendum has affected young people and others very deeply. The issue of the rise in hate crime needs to be addressed because people should not have to hide their religious identities or live in fear.
- There is a need for unity. The inter faith community needs to show a sense of solidarity; to be advocates for unity and invite people of all faith and none to show solidarity and to condemn acts of hatred and divisiveness both locally and in wider society.
- There is already a lot of excellent inter faith work taking place, such as the Interfaith Glasgow Weekend Club.
- The inter faith work already taking place should be celebrated but more needs to be done.

Closing words from the Chair

Dr Crabtree offered the following closing reflections:

- These IFN local inter faith practitioner days are not just about presentations, but also very much about the conversations.
- Events, such as the Nice attack and the recent murder of Fr Jacques Hamel in France and the rise in hate crime, had a



Participants in plenary discussion

most profoundly unsettling effect, whatever your background.

- Today's event was a reminder that we cannot let hatred and division prevail. Inter faith work is about common cause and making society a better place. That sense of commonality had been very much present during the day.
- At times, it had seemed as though some groups felt as though they were on the back foot because, for example, of funding cuts or a lack of succession planning or low attendance at some events. These were genuine problems; at the same time, in her experience local inter faith groups were often very self-critical. It was important to remember and acknowledge the work that was going well and to continue to work from a place of conviction.
- She had learned a great deal from the day and it had been a privilege to take part. She hoped that others had also found the day a fruitful one.
- She thanked the speakers, presenters and her colleagues in the IFN office and wished all a safe journey home.

SUMMARY NOTES FROM WORKSHOPS

Workshop A: Working for united communities – tackling prejudice, tensions and hate crime

This workshop was facilitated by Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, IFN with an opening presentation from Alistair Beattie, Bristol Multi Faith Forum and Duncan Struthers, Bristol Multi Faith Forum and Hillingdon Inter Faith Network.

Introductory points offered by the speakers are listed, followed by points made by participants in discussion.

Opening presentations

Bristol Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) was established in 2004 and is one of two inter faith bodies in Bristol, the other being the Bristol Inter Faith Group. It started as a local authority initiative which was intended to be made up of a number of single faith forums, each feeding into the Multi Faith Forum to advise the City Council. This proved impractical and it became an independent body. It has a paid development worker for 21 hours a week through the local authority.

BMFF has links with the local authority but sets its own agenda and priorities as well as working with other groups promoting equality. Wherever possible it joins with others to form partnerships and works with them to achieve common goals, this also includes non-faith groups. BMFF seeks to achieve its aims by: “Giving a voice for

people of faith following a decade where faith has been greatly sidelined; serving as a Forum for Faith Communities to enter into dialogue with each other and with relevant organs of the statutory, private and voluntary sectors; and, developing and nurturing leadership in the faith communities, in partnership with those communities, in order to do the above and also to be a platform for focus on commonalities and shared objectives amongst the faiths.

The Forum works to alleviate community tension and promote community cohesion through:

- promoting and supporting the work of faith groups in the community;
- acting as a bridge between the faith communities and the statutory and voluntary sectors;
- being visible in the community life of Bristol; and
- enabling faith groups to stand together.

In Bristol there was an incident at Totterdown Mosque when bacon sandwiches were left in the shoes of worshippers. In response local faith communities came together in an act of solidarity and hundreds of people turned up in support. Many local residents had never been to the mosque and were not Muslim but thought of it as ‘their mosque’ and wanted to support it.

The English Defence League (EDL) held a march in Bristol. They could not rally enough supporters locally so they bussed supporters in from around the country. The

Anti-Nazi League held a counter march and there was violence, with the EDL portraying themselves as victims. BMFF held a peace walk on the following Sunday, working with the police. Three times as many people were at the peace walk as on the EDL march. Flowers were given out at the end. It provided a great witness to the idea that different faiths do not have to exist in conflict but that they can work together, to support each other and to stand up to hate. Since then there have been other events, such as vigils. The event also helped build relationships with the media.

When the new Mayor was elected he was asked 'What are you doing with the police about hate crime?' BMFF took the message back to the faith communities. The Mayor has formed a Brexit response group and BMFF is one of the seven groups represented on it.

Annually there is an Open Doors Day held in Bristol where places of worship open their doors to all. It is possible to visit many places in a day due to their proximity, so BMFF produced a trail for the day. The local authority supports this by providing a free bus service between places of worship. This has been running for some years. Sometimes there is a theme but not always.

Hillingdon Inter Faith Network's (HIFN) aim is to promote religious harmony through greater understanding and respect within the London Borough of Hillingdon. HIFN provides opportunities for members of faith and non-faith communities to learn from each other, highlighting the need for cross communal support, working together to achieve peace and unity in the Borough. There are a wide variety of activities that are held in faith buildings across Hillingdon, organised in such a way that members of the community can easily find out what is happening in the various faith traditions locally. HIFN has also

produced a card which tells people what to do if they, or someone they know, is the victim of a hate incident.

Discussion points

Inclusion and active involvement

- It can sometimes feel as though there are not enough 'ordinary people' involved in inter faith and multi faith engagement.
- Self-appointed leaders and 'gatekeepers' can be an issue in local inter faith work.
- In Bristol membership of BMFF has been opened to all those who are interested. This helps ordinary people be heard.
- Different topics of discussion, such as organ donation or safeguarding encourage different audiences to attend and contribute. In Bristol this has widened the base for involvement.
- In Hillingdon having meetings at different faith community centres means that members are able to meet people who otherwise they would not engage with from another faith whilst being fully engaged in their own faith.
- In some areas, women have encountered difficulties engaging in inter faith groups. Sometimes this leads to setting up women-only inter faith groups.
- It is important to enable people to see where they fit into an inter/multi faith group.
- Sometimes only the 'liberal wing' of a faith tradition is involved in inter faith work and this can be difficult to overcome.
- Language is important. The terms liberal and conservative can be unhelpful. In western traditions the term 'fundamentalist' is often seen as a pejorative; in some eastern traditions it is seen as a positive.

- It is important to include the voices of people we find difficult to listen to. Likewise, it is important to promote the positive benefits of good community relations.

Demography, geography and diversity

- Where there are small numbers or concentrations of people from non-Christian backgrounds this poses a challenge in terms of diversity of groups.
- In some regions cities can help support rural inter faith groups. For example, BMFF has provided outreach to inter faith groups in more rural surrounding areas.
- Sometimes providing a space within a rural setting provides a particular sort of solution. Holland House in Worcestershire hosted a multi faith picnic, providing vegan food and a bouncy castle. This provided a space beyond the city for people to meet in a neutral space but one which was rich in the values of friendship and hospitality.
- Virtual awareness through the internet and e-resources is one way of providing a bridge to real encounter for those in rural areas.
- Inter church encounter can be a starting place for inter faith encounter, especially where churches fall outside of groups like Churches Together.
- The way people encounter each other and in what spaces is also important.
- Sometimes meeting in homes and not places of worship can positively change the dynamic.
- It can be helpful to approach engagement through non theological routes. An example was given of meetings held with a focus on food and conversations that weren't to do with religion. In one case it was a year before anyone broached the issue of theology.
- Sometimes simply being with 'the other' respectfully is important.
- It is possible to participate in what others are doing without losing your integrity or compromising the other, for example taking part in an iftar or zazen sitting. Key is the attitude of respect.
- Encounter can be difficult if religious leaders seem to disapprove of encounter or where significant groups misinterpret what others are doing, such as seeing Hindu worship as idolatrous. People working in inter faith relations need to engage with others to enable there to be a positive, non-judgemental, encounter, realising that not all people are ready for some kinds of encounter or wish these. Sometimes inter faith practitioners also need to make a stand where they believe things are deliberately being misconstrued.

Inter faith encounter, hate crime and cohesion

- Inter faith encounter doesn't only help people to respond to hate crime, it also reduces hate crime over time. This is to be welcomed as we seek to build a more cohesive society.

Enabling positive encounter

- Encounter is crucial to inter faith dialogue and work.
- Solidarity has to go beyond action to relationships and the building of real friendships.
- Agreed syllabuses for Religious Education have an important role. Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus states that all pupils have to have the opportunity to visit places of worship and meet people of faith in the locality. This has been boosted by a faith trail – which

sometimes goes far beyond the local authority's boundaries – and a Peace Festival where inter faith understanding, not just individual faiths, are showcased. Warwick District Faiths Forum is now working with the Police to develop a Citizens' Academy.

- With faith trails and faith visits it can often become about architecture as opposed to the faith lives of real people and their communities and this needs to be taken into account. In Lancashire Evangelical Christians weren't simply asked to visit the local mosque but were invited to see people at prayer and this had a profound impact on some. Similarly, Muslim girls from a school had been taken to the mosque to observe prayer. Many came from a tradition where women did not regularly go to a mosque. They were moved by the way men prayed and by the way they conducted themselves.

The nature of inter faith relations

- Inter faith is not a faith. This is a matter which is often misunderstood by those who oppose it. Working for inter faith relations is about social solidarity and realising that what is a problem for one group is a problem for all groups. There is a need to ensure leaders understand this where there are blocks put in place to stifle encounter.
- People's own histories have an impact on their perceptions of inter faith work. So people who have suffered from discrimination are often at the forefront of efforts to support those who are being discriminated against now. People can bring their prejudices with them. In one faith community there was overwhelming support for another community that had endured hate crime with the exception of a convert to that initial faith community who found it difficult to understand why they should be involving themselves at all.

- One aspect of inter faith dialogue is respecting the integrity of the other. Proselytism is an issue for some communities more than others. Good ground rules and rules of engagement are essential.

Being human

- It is important to focus on our common humanity and simply being human to others. One participant said that he had been a human long before he was a Christian.
- The Weekend Club of Interfaith Glasgow is about being human together. Eritreans and Ethiopians started talking and realised that they have more in common than they thought. Given the conflict between their nations they had never met each other before and so felt they couldn't talk to each other. Very often people's perceptions come through the prism of others and there is a need to break that prism.
- Space has to be created to enter into productive relationships and to remove barriers. The key to this is education in families, communities and schools. Therefore creating space is essential as is educating future generations. Being able to promote peace in communities and society is vital as these provide the context for human flourishing.
- The Dalai Lama observed that we in the West travel all over the world to meet new people but won't cross the road to meet our neighbours.
- Inter faith relations are ultimately about building bridges, sometimes in your own families, sometimes between families, sometimes within a community and at other times across them.
- Those committed to inter faith work need to think about how they can put this across better.

Other points

- The current political context is significant, especially a possible British Bill of Rights that would replace the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights. This could be potentially damaging to society as a whole.
- Inter Faith Week is key as a time to build good relationships and build respect that enables dialogue.

Workshop B: Working in partnership for the common good

This workshop was facilitated by Chaudry Shafique MBE, Council for Christian Muslim Relations in High Wycombe

Introductory points offered by the speakers are listed, followed by points made by participants in discussion.

Opening reflections: Dr Peter Rookes, Birmingham Council of Faiths

Introductory points offered by the speaker are listed, followed by points made by participants in discussion.

Partnership working

Birmingham Council of Faiths (BCF) increasingly conducts much of its work through its partnerships with other organisations and individuals. These include formal relationships, collaborative arrangements, groups working as part of BCF, and looser networks.

Formal Relationships

Birmingham City Council was the first Local Authority to sign a covenant recognising the importance of faith organisations to the life of the City and pledging its intention to work together.

The Lord Mayor is invited each year to be Honorary President of Birmingham Council of Faiths. He or she presides at the AGM and attends a number of events. BCF also works increasingly closely with the Cabinet Member for Diversity at Birmingham City Council, although this is often frustrated by changes in the Cabinet Member after local council elections.

Particular initiatives on which BCF has collaborated with the City Council are the Birmingham Faiths' Map, coordination of the Birmingham programme for Inter Faith Week, and supporting diversity events and initiatives.

Collaborative Arrangements

BCF has collaborated for 8 years with the Scout Association, and increasingly with the Girl Guides, in organising a 'Faiths for Fun' event for 7-12 year olds. Over this period the numbers of children participating has risen from 30 to 106, with over 50 adult helpers. The great benefit of this event is not just bringing together children of different cultures and faiths, and those of no faith, to learn about each other's faiths, but also adults as helpers and parents, who would not normally come together. The 9th 'Faiths for Fun' event is planned for 2 April 2017.

BCF works with a number of other organisations that have a focus on young people, including The Feast, a project working mainly with Christian and Muslim young people in Birmingham.

NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and Provider Trusts are recognising the value of faith community organisations as alternative providers particularly for vulnerable people, and also as advocates and important groups to be consulted about proposed changes. BCF has been organising twice-yearly 'Faiths, Health & Wellbeing' Seminars for 4 years as part of the 'Faiths in the City' initiative. A wide

range of topics have been covered including mental health, dementia, domestic violence, primary care, public health and safeguarding. Participants at the seminars include chaplains, faith organisations, charities, health workers, patients and carers. All presenters willingly give their time free of charge, which enables BCF to organise the seminars free of charge.

BCF created the post of Third Sector Liaison Officer several years ago with the express purpose of developing relationships between faith organisations and other parts of the voluntary and community sector. Membership of the Third Sector Assembly and Birmingham Voluntary Services Council enables BCF to engage more fully with the wider sector. BVSC is coordinating 3 major Big Lottery programmes, in which faith community organisations have important roles.

Groups working as part of BCF

‘Footsteps for a Low Carbon Future’ is a sub-group of BCF established for faith groups to engage in action to reduce the effects of climate change. Activities include seminars, walks between places of worship engaged in environmental issues, and an event called ‘Small Footsteps’ through which 30 children aged 8-14 visit 5 different faith buildings to carry out an environmental activity in each.

‘Sacred Space’, also part of BCF, organises quarterly meals for people of different faiths, with speakers on topical subjects.

Looser Networks

Individual members of BCF are involved in a range of other networks supported by BCF. These include the Police Chaplains’ and Faith Advisors’ Network; Local Faith Networks; the Faith Encounter Programme which trains faith guides; and the Women’s Peace Movement.

It is BCF’s experience that there is an increasing desire on the part of civil society to engage with faith community organisations. There is a view that this is as a result of austerity and diminishing resources on the part of statutory organisations, but whether or not this is true, there is an increasing opportunity for faith community organisations to bring their distinctive values to meeting this challenge.

Discussion points

Young people

- It’s difficult to know how to get young people involved.
- Faiths for Fun only had 30 children involved initially, but it then promoted itself through Facebook and online. It also spread the word through faith community organisations and places of worship and through bodies such as the Scout Association and Girlguiding UK. However, the most effective method of increasing involvement is personal contact, for example giving people leaflets. Parents also spread the word at school gates.
- Very few young people are involved in inter faith groups.
- It is a common experience for members of local inter faith groups to be older because they have more time available to commit to it.
- It is good to start inter faith activities, such as the Faiths for Fun initiative, early because children can then build relationships which will help them to survive testing times in the future.
- The spiritual needs of the young are not being met by joining formal organisations, so numbers are declining. Grace Davie’s book ‘Religion in Britain

Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging' has much to say about this.

- The speaker had experience of trying to get young families to be more active in the Jewish community. This was in some respects easier because it was a community not just a faith, but it was still difficult.
- The decline in young people joining formal organisations is not across the board. There has, for instance, been an increase in the number of young people joining the Scouting movement.
- The speaker had lived abroad for some time and found it hard to find a church to settle into when returning, because he didn't want to be 'told what to do'. That was similar for many young people where the Christian tradition was concerned. However, they were joining less formal organisations like Vineyard and Riverside churches.

Assessing the need and starting projects

- It's important to assess the needs locally, but this can sometimes be difficult.
- Warwick District Faiths Forum (WDFE) was set up 10 years ago with discussions by the local council. Some faith communities were for and some were against. A subgroup was set up to find out what the local needs were. It was found that there was a need to involve statutory and voluntary sector bodies, not just faith communities. Now representatives from the police, chaplaincy, youth justice system and others all come to WDFE meetings and they can take away faith community issues to their organisations. People from a range of bodies ask to come and speak at WDFE meetings. The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service had asked WDFE if it could make a faith awareness presentation to its staff.

- Making links doesn't just happen – it has to be worked at. It's important to build trust on a human level. Everyone is looking after one another and people are stronger together.
 - There used to be a statutory requirement for Local Strategic Partnerships to work with faith groups. Sadly this is no longer in place.
 - It's helpful if people of faith are encouraged to stand for election on local councils and, for example, NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and Foundation Trusts.
 - WDFE originated as an idea of the local Mayor who had it put into the Warwick District Local Plan.
 - In High Wycombe they set up a faith leaders' forum in order to work out which faith communities would be nominated to sit on the Local Strategic Partnership.
 - Rugby, from where the speaker came, is an example of a small community, which is not particularly diverse and where there are no obvious starting places for cooperative inter faith work.
 - However small you begin, it is important to begin. The project will grow
 - Personal contact builds trust.
 - People need to have an in depth vision of their own faith communities to talk to people of no faith.
 - Partnerships among local inter faith groups themselves are important.
- #### Chaplaincies and Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs)
- It is most unhelpful that there are cuts planned in funding for hospital chaplaincies.

- Some say that faith communities should fund chaplaincies themselves.
- Individual members of Birmingham SACRE are involved in BCF but not the SACRE itself.

A decline in belief?

- In the 1970s the decline of religion was a hot topic and a key US academic predicted the end of religion by the year 2000. But religion has had a renaissance around the world.
- In Europe secularisation is continuing and bucking the trend in the rest of the world.
- If religion is declining will there be less people of faith to take part in inter faith work? If so, what is the alternative to inter faith work?
- There are now chaplains in many more places, such as shopping centres and airports so the need for spiritual guidance and care is still there, but may be more informal.
- Religion is changing.
- If worship becomes less based around formal organisations and places of worship it will be harder to make links, because they are often the starting points.
- Although there is a decline in attendance at places of worship, the decline in belief itself is at a slower rate.
- Religion is not just about belief.

Religious/Non-religious dialogue

- It's important for people of faith to engage with people who have no formal faith connection. However, this sometimes leads to suspicion. In Cambridge, for example, the inter faith group carries out community work and

some people think they are being missionary.

- A change in the promise which they have to take has opened up the Scout movement to children of all faiths and none.

Workshop C – Social Media – tips and pointers for using it successfully

This workshop was given by Amy Hobbs of digital marketing agency SocialB. The points below are a combination of those made by her and by participants.

Current background to the use of social media

- Currently, there are 38 million active social media users in the UK, the majority of which belong to young adults.
- The most common social media platforms are Facebook, Youtube and Twitter through which the public can easily be reached.
- When using social media it is important to ask questions, such as 'Who do you want to target?' 'How do and can you communicate with them?' Listening is a way to find out what people are talking about. Sharing is a form of expressing what an organisation can do and is a deeply human instinct. People want that kind of communication and social media is a platform for it. Audiences share information and this can make people want to join a conversation or event.
- On any social media platform images play a huge role in attracting people – people are 60% more likely to like, comment or share posts including

images. Examples of posts were shown, including Oxfam, The People's Picnic and Renewal. Posts can be interlinked with other media, such as a blog or website.

Facebook

- Using a Facebook page to promote your organisation is a useful way to enable the public to find out about any of your organisation's activities or events.
- Sharing posts on Facebook promotes your organisation to other users and you can see who has shared your posts on their own pages. A large number of people can be reached in this way. When people like your page, you have a temporary audience who may revisit if you remain active and keep your page up-to-date. You can get unlikes if you have not updated your page.
- If a member of the public is searching for your organisation's name on Google, then a hyperlink to your organisation's Facebook page is likely to appear, but content will be viewable only if your settings are set to 'public'.
- You have to have a personal account to edit pages. You can maintain and update pages for your organisation. If you are a member of the public or any other organisation, you have to 'like' an organisation's page if you want to receive updates/ notifications about its posts.
- Facebook has privacy settings for individual accounts that allow you to personalise what can be seen by the public and by your friends (including your personal email).
- You can promote your Facebook page by paying a fee for the promotion depending on how many days you want the promotion to last. This acts as an advertisement that is visible to Facebook users encouraging them to 'like' the page.

Although it can be considered costly, it allows your organisation to grow and get recognition on a social media platform. It is possible to target particular audiences based upon multiple factors such as age, geography and interests.

- Engaging unhelpfully with negative comments can portray your organisation in a bad light. If you have an 'organisation' type page, you can overcome this problem on Facebook by 'hiding' comments which seem offensive or are harmful if you wish. Hidden comments still show up to the user who submitted them and to page admin but not to the public.
- If you receive any complaints, it is best to avoid answering them on social media and encourage the person to make a formal complaint.

Pros and cons of social media

- Social Media is a good way to communicate with younger people, although it is worth looking at the demographics which use particular media before choosing which might be most appropriate.
- The use of social media can be seen as a way for people to overcome their embarrassment and share material they would not otherwise.
- There are many people with whom we interact who use social media and would like to stay in touch with events or activities that we do. By creating an organisation Facebook page you can stay current and keep everyone informed on what you are doing currently, have done in the past and what you will do in the future.
- The growing use and importance attached to social media (and the internet more widely) can have the effect

of excluding groups which do not have access. It is therefore important to ensure that where information or services should be available to all, social media is only one of several approaches used. For example, if a public event is only advertised on Facebook, this will limit the potential audience to Facebook users just as only advertising an event on a newsagent bulletin board will limit the potential audience to customers of that shop.

Other points

- Maintaining an organisation's social media account requires dedication and time. It is important to keep it up-to-date.
- There are creative ways that social media can help attract a wide audience. Examples include creating opportunities such as competitions (writing competitions or creating short video entries) where the public are allowed to participate.

The workshop included a demonstration on how to use Facebook effectively.

Workshop D – Religious Literacy

This workshop was facilitated by David Hampshire, Assistant Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK with opening presentations from Jatinder Singh Birdi, Warwick District Faiths Forum (WDFF) and Patricia Stevens, Harrow Interfaith.

Introductory points offered by the speakers are listed, followed by points made by participants in discussion

WDFF has been in existence for 10 years. There were two prior inter faith structures in the Warwick area which had closed. Trying to understand why they had not

endured had been a key part of the planning before WDFF was set up.

WDFF has worked to make its activity relevant, beneficial and appealing and sustainable;

- It has sought to have a presence in the community through projects such as its free multi-faith desk calendar, which has been produced annually since 2006 and acts as a physical reminder of the Forum's work.
- It tries to hold events when people are most able to attend them: for example holding faith trails at the weekend.
- It keeps meetings simple, gathering quarterly on the first day of the month.
- The group is always very open with everybody.
- Resources can be a problem, and WDFF does seek support – including in-kind support – from bodies such as the Police and local authority.

WDFF runs various events which contribute to religious literacy:

- It has helped people physically to see different faiths to learn about them, for example through the successful faith trail held in Warwick annually. This was also a way for people to learn more about their own faith – for example, one Christian participant saw an altar properly for the first time during a faith trail. Not only do people see different places of worship but also communities, for example last year a Polish church was included in the trail. Members have sometimes travelled to other towns/ cities to visit a different range of places of worship.
- At the annual peace festival, a marquee is organised where groups from different faiths gather with stands, posters and

decorations, with a different theme every year. Past themes include water, the environment and family rights. By using these common themes, often it is found that different faiths think the same way. This breaks down barriers and increases people's religious literacy. The marquee belongs to the Police and is made available for free. Each faith group is given a card to fill with information relevant to the theme.

- Conferences are run on subjects such as faith, family and friendship. They have also tackled issues such as slavery, health and wellbeing. Speakers such as the Director of Public Health have taken part and this has increased audience attendance. This is also part of adding to people's religious literacy.

Wdff organises faith awareness training, in which 4 or 5 people of different faiths spend between 20 minutes and half an hour talking about their faith and responding to questions. These last about half a day. This provides a forum for people to learn about religions and skills for engagement. Wdff run the training days for a range of groups, including councillors and police officers. It currently does not charge. Some points about this training are:

- It is important that speakers for these kinds of training day are well prepared and given some training themselves. It is preferable to ask speakers known to the community.
- A key ground rule for such training that no one speaks for another faith than their own. Speakers are not be billed as representatives – their views must be framed as personal ones rather than the views of a whole tradition.
- At the beginning of the training Wdff makes it clear that even within faiths there are many differences.

It is important to work together to provide the community with what it needs. Less well known faith groups such as the Mormons and Pagans should also be involved.

Harrow Interfaith – then called Harrow Inter Faith Council – was established in 1983. It operates in what was until recently the most diverse borough in the UK.

The forging of connections between Harrow Interfaith and Harrow SACRE goes back a long time ago and they work cohesively. There are members of Harrow Interfaith that are also members of Harrow SACRE and there are some, like Ms Stevens, who are members of both.

One of the first events they did together involved children from a local school going into their faith communities to learn about them.

Harrow Interfaith have organised for the sixth forms to hold conferences for Year 10 and 11 pupils and also organise debates in schools. Members go into schools regularly and act as advisors for the school syllabus.

In recent years people have joined Harrow Interfaith via their faith organisations, for example through their synagogue or their mosque. Schools, police and fellow interfaith initiatives have also joined since an organisational membership option was created. Working together has built up trust, spirituality and variety. All the different faith communities are included and invited to be a part of the group, and the meetings are advertised where possible.

Many of Harrow Interfaith's activities contribute to religious literacy:

- Harrow Interfaith organises multi-faith pilgrimages. It has found that there are many common threads among different faiths.

- In times of difficulty, members of the interfaith group meet for meditation and prayer, and support each other.
- Faith members are generous in their invitations to religious celebrations.
- Recently Harrow Interfaith started an event similar to 'Question Time' which has been very popular. There are always three people from the inter faith committee present to respond to questions, from a wide range of faith backgrounds. These are sometimes quite hard hitting and there is often discussion of topical issues. There is always a high number of young people in attendance.
- A civic service was held recently in which the whole interfaith council went up to the altar and recited the Millennium Act of Commitment, which is about working together for the common good.
- There are a lot of people in public jobs who are not religious. Better public conversations, training, and awareness of religion are needed.

Differences within religion

- Every place is different and people's needs are different. Initiatives should be tailored to the needs of the people in a particular area.
- Most places of worship are atypical of that type of worship in the country of origin. People need to worship God from within their culture; the impact of geography and culture is important to understand.
- Expressions of religion are often tightly tied in with cultural expressions. To be religiously literate requires a level of cultural literacy as well.

Religious literacy in hospitals

- In hospices, chaplains often work with the terminally ill. While they are often not religious, they ask a lot of deep questions.

Steering the conversation away from religion

- Where food or some kind of theme that is not overtly religious is the focus, this can bring the humanity out of the individual, and inter faith engagement happens almost as if by accident.
- Inter religious dialogue needs to be sociological, community building; it shouldn't be theological. In 'Field of Dreams' Kevin Costner says 'If you build it, they will come'. In inter faith we find that if you cook it, they will come.

Discussion points

Religious literacy and children

- In many cases families have moved to this country from another, bringing their religion with them. However, this means that when children ask questions about faith, parents are not always able to answer. This results in children who know very little about their own religion. It is beneficial to provide a religious literacy course for those people.
- SACREs are important. In the Milton Keynes area Inset days are organised for teachers, and a magazine called SACRED is produced, which goes into every school. Children can't be expected to be religiously literate if their teachers and parents aren't themselves.

Religious literacy in the government

- Lack of education contributes to religious discrimination. The Government must be shown the importance of learning about religion.

Workshop E – Change and opportunity

This workshop was facilitated by Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, Inter Faith

Network for the UK, with opening presentation from Canon Andrew Pratt, Lancashire Forum of Faiths, and Reynold Rosenberg and Valerie Skottowe, Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

Introductory points offered by the speakers are listed, followed by points made by participants in discussion.

Canon Andrew Pratt, Lancashire Forum of Faiths

Lancashire Forum of Faiths (LFF) seeks to operate at a strategic level across the County of Lancashire, engaging with the main statutory and voluntary sector partners to promote understanding, co-operation and joint working for the common good between people of faith and no faith. It sits on a number of strategic boards across the County to promote the work of different faiths.

LFF's experience is that there is little understanding of how different people of faith can contribute to the wider common good in the context of the various strategic planning mechanisms in the County. This lack of understanding and lack of religious literacy on the part of policy makers and politicians may be due to a number of factors:

- The approach of 'We don't do God'.
- Fear of getting it wrong when addressing different groups and of public criticism if that happens.
- Not actually knowing what the various faith groups/institutions do.
- Mistrust in commissioning services – ie, that people won't use them for the common good but only to serve their 'own' people.

One of the main phrases to remember is 'oceans to well frogs' – the commissioners,

(the well frogs), aren't familiar with the faith community landscape because they've never seen it (the ocean). There is also the challenge that not all faith communities have formal structures so it can be difficult for local authorities to engage with them.

LFF was once funded with 3 full time workers, but in the past 6 years there has been no support from the public sector and so it operates with volunteers only. The lack of financial contribution to LFF not only signals a lack of money but may also suggest a lack of interest.

Faith communities have a lot to offer to help, but are often tied by bureaucracy. For instance, locally the Free Churches moved their premises to be closer to the prison and now receive around 5 referrals per day from Social Services; to do things such as helping people to clear rubbish, but when they take the rubbish to the local refuse tip they are not allowed to enter because they're in a van. There are other examples too where faith communities might be able to help, perhaps by keeping open the local library.

Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group (WHIFG) was started by the local authority 11 years ago and they still have a good relationship. For example, the Mayor asked WHIFG to organise an inter faith civic service. However, there has been a large decrease in funding and the local authority's priorities have changed. It no longer offers in-kind support of free room hire. It previously offered secretarial support which stopped for a while and has now re-started. So, the situation is OK but could be better.

60% of the 1 million people in Hertfordshire say that they relate to a religion. However, not more than 10% go to a place of worship. Local inter faith

groups therefore have to go out and find people in new ways, for instance through social media. Also, WHIFG, like many local inter faith groups, has an ageing membership. This is an incentive to attract new members, perhaps those who are newly retired, rather than young people, as young people have their own busy agendas.

Islamophobia and anti-Semitism have increased and social unrest is more visible. Such changes are negative but could perhaps be opportunities to engage more with the council and to find new members.

WHIFG's work is both academic and community driven, including discussion groups and talks as well as projects to help schools. For example, it is working with schools to run inter faith assemblies and to provide class work specific to certain faiths.

WHIFG has set up a project called WHISPER: Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Schools' Peace Education and Resource. The project officer is funded by the local United Reformed Church. The project sends volunteers from many faiths to visit schools in support of Religious Education and also to teach tools for inter faith dialogue and co-operation. They are hoping to train 6th Form students to be Ambassadors to then go into other schools themselves. The local SACRE has given WHIFG a grant towards some of this work.

The hardest age for WHIFG to reach seems to be post graduates. They had four inspiring young speakers at an event and they would like to do more of this, but young people move away and it is hard to keep a core group.

WHIFG finds it helpful to be a member of IFN and has found its material on youth inter faith work helpful, especially for the WHISPER project.

Discussion points

Faith Covenant

- LFF has been encouraging the Council to get involved with the Faith Covenant, set up by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Social Action – www.faithaction.net/work/faith-covenant/. The Covenant wording is flexible.
- Barnet Council has signed the Faith Covenant and this has helped to give structure to the relationship between the faith communities and the Council and also given publicity.
- The Covenant is not a requirement for a relationship with a local authority but can be helpful. Some faith communities don't like the Covenant because they feel it constrains them and they feel they have to prove, for example, that they are not proselytising.
- Plymouth Council of Faiths is currently looking at the possibility of signing the Covenant with Plymouth Council, but the wording is due to be amended to reflect faith communities being in the driving seat following a cut in funding.
- LFF includes unitary authorities.
- The boundaries for local authorities and unitary authorities don't always match with the areas covered by local inter faith organisations which can mean engaging with more than one local authority.

Young people

- A lot of young people are not familiar with inter faith activities and don't know what to expect. It can be helpful for young people to work together for a common cause and put faith to one side, rather than that being the focus.
- Young people are less interested in organised religion.

- Young people are interested in religion and want to talk about it. Near Neighbours projects have found imaginative ways to bring young people together. Good practices like this can be shared.
- One of Near Neighbours' partners, Catalyst, is a very good programme for engaging with young people. Near Neighbours currently only funds projects in certain areas, but provides small grants for projects.
- Inter faith groups need to find young people where they already are – for example, on social media – and to show them the positive aspects of inter faith engagement. Inter faith dialogue can give young people a voice to talk about real issues and can help young people, for example with their college projects.
- 3FF run great programmes for young people, such as the ParliaMentors' programme.
- IFN has a website about youth inter faith work at youth.interfaith.org.uk.
- There is a lot of youth work going on in individual faith communities, for example through youth clubs. The difficulty is that inter faith groups need individuals with time and commitment and it is therefore not always easy for young people to stay involved.
- Young people like projects rather than just dialogue.
- Young people do want to join organisations. There has been an increase in the number joining the Scout movement since 2007.
- Young people want to be involved in action and to talk in between times.
- In Birmingham 5,000 young people meet together each week from different faith communities, with 1,000 adult helpers.
- Young people enjoy the Scouts Helping Hands project because they help communities together and just talk as part of it.
- The Scout Association has a good infrastructure, which is needed to sustain such projects.
- Young people want to learn about other people's opinions. Social media is key to that. Campaigns could help. They need a neutral space in which to engage. Projects like bake-off competitions are great for getting young people to join in.
- Mitzvah Day is a good example of inter faith social action involving young people. Sewa Day is also an example of this.
- There are often ethnic and religious divides in secondary school classes. In Lancashire, for instance, an event had been held where teenagers from Christian, Hindu and Muslim backgrounds came together and, although many of them were in the same school class it was the first time that some of them had spoken to one another.

Challenges

- How can people draw on their faith backgrounds to promote inter faith work?
- How can small places build from a little bubble to become useful?
- Social media is a very good way to engage but it can also be time-consuming. Most local inter faith groups don't have the luxury of expertise in social media. Involving young people can help this.

- It is possible to do quite a lot without funding. All faith communities hold their own activities anyway, so it's possible just to invite other communities to join in.
- Some groups are involved in outward facing work such as consultative work or speaking in schools. Where there is no funding, the responsibility can fall on the shoulders of just a few volunteers. This can lead to burn out and, in turn, to less outward engagement.
- Succession planning is important.

Membership structures

- WHIFG started its membership with the 9 faiths in the UN Charter of 2000. However, it has now changed to allow any faiths into membership whose aims are in line with the philosophy of WHIFG.
- Barnet Multi Faith Forum is interested to use a youth forum model to get more young people involved and would welcome any advice on this. Many faith communities are involved in the Barnet Multi Faith Festival taking place this August. This will present faith communities in a positive light and its being promoted on social media.
- BCF decided to reconsider the question of 'what is a member?' It now has full members, who pay to belong and can be on the Committee (both individual and corporate), associate members, who don't pay and can come to all events, and around 1,500 friends on Facebook. BCF has found this flexibility to be very useful. It has also found that being action-oriented has been useful.

Other points

- Common action for the common good is at the heart of all inter faith work.

Workshop F: Funding and resourcing our work

This workshop was led by Simon Batten, Funding Advice and Support Officer, Coventry Voluntary Action.

Introductory points offered by the speaker are listed, followed by points made by the speaker and participants in discussion.

Current Outlook on Funding

The current operating environment is much tougher than it has been for a number of years. Cuts have affected many charity organisations. Most organisations have previously profited from geographical programmes of funding, single regeneration budgets and neighbourhood renewal funds. This has left many organisations in a vulnerable position where local authorities are imposing limits on grants available to organisations.

The result of the EU Referendum, known as Brexit, is one of the issues that may impact on priority neighbourhoods. The Government uses information to identify those neighbourhoods or geographical areas in the country which are most vulnerable. Those areas would have received some funding from a range of European Community grants but at this point in time it is not known whether the funding programmes will be replaced.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations ran a useful webinar on the impact of Brexit on voluntary organisations, resources produced for this event can be found at: www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/europe.

Funding Strategies

How you select a fundraising strategy depends on your type of organisation and what stage you are at. The majority of applications which were not successful did not identify the need for their service or project clearly.

The most successful approach for fundraising is to plan what you need to do and what is needed to support that and make it happen. This needs to be (a) within the law of the land and (b) within the plans, objectives and aims of your organisation, as set out in your organisation's governing documents.

Fundraising is about selling an idea to someone who has the means to help you make it happen. The more direct and personal your approach, the more likely you are to be successful. For example, when you are doing a street collection or when you are making an appeal for an event, you are actually 'selling' something. A lot of people may support what you are trying to do but not everyone will necessarily support it financially. The level of success you have is in large part based on your ability to convince that person and to make a connection with that person, persuading them to take action to support what you want to do.

Planning a fundraising strategy

One of the challenges people often find with fundraising is that it takes time. It helps to be able to plan ahead. It can be good to look at quick ways to enable you to get the resources to support your organisation and develop fundraising programmes for a longer period of time.

The majority of funders set deadlines for applications, so you need to think ahead and use your limited time effectively to find funders and supporters who will most likely be able to provide the right type of resource for you.

There are over 8,000 charitable trust funds in the UK that support charities. Some of them have a specific focus, such as animal welfare or health or faith. The advancement of religion is a charitable purpose and there are a number of charity foundations that support this. There are also trusts and foundations which are interested in the advancement and promotion of citizenship and community development. It may be that whilst your work is being done by a faith organisation, for example, if you use volunteers you are advancing community development. Many people don't realise that the activities and services they are providing may actually fulfil the criteria that Trusts require when looking at making a grant.

Understanding what you are working towards is a major step when making funding applications.

There are six main sources from which voluntary and charitable organisations secure funds:

1. Gift economy – these donations are pure charity donations usually given for unrestricted purposes.
2. Grant Income – often restricted and given for a certain purpose.
3. Structured market – this is for commissioned services.
4. Open market – this is the sale of goods/services
5. Loan finance – this has been a problem for some faith communities, but now, for example, the Islamic Bank has created interest free loans which do not conflict with Islamic teachings.
6. Venture Philanthropy – this is when high wealth individuals put their skills, knowledge and finance into an

organisation. They may expect something in return.

Discussion points

- Membership subscription fees are a commonly used way of raising funds. These can be voluntary.
- It is possible to obtain grants from civic trusts (usually town endowment trusts based on property) and County Councils.
- There are often trusts that fund in specific local areas.
- Having a good relationship with local places of worship is helpful as they can offer in-kind donations such as the use of premises.
- Voluntary donations from the public can be raised when holding inter faith events.
- Money can be saved within organisations, for instance by reducing energy bills, which can then provide money to support projects.
- Legacies, left through wills, are a useful source of funding.
- Grants are also available for public health work which is administered by local councils. For example, the public health sector commissions faith organisations to carry out work as a way of targeting individuals from communities to which they would otherwise have no access. Examples of work included securing 45 minutes for people to have health check-ups (for diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure) at community based venues.
- Some businesses may be willing to offer funding, if they support your organisation's goals. Networking is key. There may be many multi faith businesses that are happy to help.
- Any corporate sponsorship should be very carefully researched as the corporate body's needs may not match with your organisation's aims and they may want more in return than you can give.
- There are different types of funding. It is possible to apply for project funding as well as core funding. Donations may be restricted or unrestricted. You will need to decide in advance what type of funding you are seeking.
- Tribute giving is another form of funding. This is the giving of items by friends or families to organisations, such as furniture, or financial donations.
- Some local organisations are small and although there is the will to seek funding, people can be put off by paperwork and reporting requirements. If you can overcome this, there is a wide scope to receive generous funds.

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

10.15 am	Registration and refreshments
10.30 am	Opening of the morning session, welcome and setting of context of the day from the chair: Harriet Crabtree , Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) Welcome to Coventry, Mehru Fitter MBE , Coventry Multi Faith Forum
10.40 am	Local inter faith organisations – a vital resource in our communities Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE , Co-Chair, IFN Reflections from his role as Co-Chair of IFN and also from the perspective of involvement, as Bishop of Bedford, in local inter faith initiatives. Why local inter faith organisations are so important and some of the ways that they make a difference to their local communities.
10.50 am	Discussion
11.00 am	Looking after One Another How do and can local inter faith groups work to tackle tensions and hate crime, dispel prejudice and encourage positive interaction? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narendra Waghela, Leicester Council of Faiths and IFN Trustee, talks about how Leicester came together in the days following the EU Referendum outcome• Sally Sealey OBE, Senior Policy Adviser on Hate Crime, Integration and Faith Directorate, Department for Communities and Local Government
11.15 am	Discussion
11.25 am	Serving together Faith communities work together in many different ways to make a difference to their communities. We hear from one initiative from Scotland that is responding to a pressing need in their community. Mohamed Omar , Project Officer, Interfaith Glasgow Interfaith Glasgow have set up a ‘Weekend Club’ as their response to the social isolation experienced by asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants in Glasgow. It addresses the need for newcomers to get to know Glasgow, especially over the weekend; to understand Scottish culture and

	history better; and improve their English in fun and relaxed settings. Its Project Officer gives an insight into the project.
11.35 am	Discussion and sharing of other groups' experience of social action projects
11.50 am	Morning Workshops
	Details about each workshop are at the end of the programme.
	A. Working for united communities – tackling prejudice, tensions and hate crime
	B. Working in partnership for the common good
	C. Social media – tips and pointers for using it successfully
1.00 pm	LUNCH – A vegetarian sandwich lunch will be provided
1.45 pm	Post-lunch workshops
	D. Religious literacy
	E. Change and opportunity
	F. Funding and resourcing our work
2.55 pm	Reflections following the workshops
	A chance to share reflections emerging from workshop discussions
3:15 pm	Reaching out and growing involvement
	Rabbi Dr Robert Ash , Preston Faiths Forum talks about how they have been using week long programmes for Inter Faith Week and other routes to expand involvement in inter faith activity in Preston.
3.25	Discussion, including sharing of Inter Faith Week plans
3.40	Reflections on the themes of the day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Revd Andy Williams, Faiths Network For Manchester • Sean Finlay, Wisbech Interfaith Forum • Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi, Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship
	Closing words from the Chair
4pm	Close

Workshop information

Morning

A. Working for united communities – tackling prejudice, tensions and hate crime

Facilitator: Ashley Beck, Inter Faith Development Officer, IFN

Opening reflections from Alistair Beattie and Duncan Struthers, Bristol Multi Faith Forum with plenary contributor Sally Sealy

- What steps can local inter faith groups take to prevent and help resolve community tensions?
- How can we best respond to help communities which feel fearful or under threat?
- What steps can we take to demonstrate solidarity and also offer practical assistance?
- What are the signs of communities which are positively cohesive?

B. Working in partnership for the common good

Facilitator: Chaudry Shafique MBE, Council for Christian Muslim Relations in High Wycombe

Opening reflections from Dr Peter Rookes, Birmingham Council of Faiths and David Vane, Southampton Council of Faiths.

- What kinds of partnership can help us carry out our aims?
- What benefits do partnership projects bring to all concerned?
- How best can we engage with local government and other agencies for the benefit of our local community?

C. Social media – tips and pointers for using it successfully

Amy Hobson, SocialB, award winning social media experts and trainers

- An introduction to social media
- How social media relates to bodies like local inter faith groups
- The benefits of actively using social media
- How can we make effective use of Facebook and Twitter?
- Are LinkedIn and Instagram relevant to us?

- How can we make sure our different ways of communicating are well integrated and have impact?
- And more!

Afternoon

D. Religious literacy

Facilitator: David Hampshire, Asst Director, Inter Faith Network

Initial reflections: Jatinder Singh Birdi, Warwick District Faiths Forum and Pat Stevens, Harrow Interfaith

- How do we as local inter faith organisations contribute to religious literacy in society?
- How do we learn together within our group's meetings and events?
- How do we contribute to greater understanding about religions and beliefs within our local community?
- Contributing to good RE through engagement with local schools and work with SACREs.

E. Change and opportunity

Facilitator: Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director IFN

Opening reflections: Reynold Rosenberg and Valerie Skottowe, Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith and Canon Andrew Pratt, Lancashire Forum of Faiths

- How do we see the changes in our operating environment – the needs and possibilities, the challenges and opportunities?
- How do we draw in new people and organisations to our work – and retain and strengthen the involvement of existing members?
- Is there an age gap? How can we work across the generations?
- How do we develop our work in a changing social and economic context?
- Does our membership structure shape who takes part and how?
- Are we evaluating our activities to see what works well?
- What do we hope our membership and work might look like in 3 years' time? How are we planning to achieve our vision?

F. Funding and resourcing our work

Simon Batten, Funding Advice and Support Officer, Coventry Voluntary Action

- Attracting funding for activities and projects
- The kind of resources we need to enable us to carry out our work
- How best to fundraise
- Planning for raising funds
- Demonstrating need and describing outcomes positively
- The importance of monitoring and evaluation
- Identifying suitable sources of funding
- Tips on raising funds – such as what makes a successful bid
- Submitting funding applications

The Inter Faith Network for the UK

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

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

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

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

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

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



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Front cover photographs (top to bottom): IFN Co-Chair, the Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE; Usman Ali, Wakefield Interfaith Group and Narendra Waghela, Leicester Council of Faiths and IFN Trustee; Jaskiran Kaur Mehmi, Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship; the Revd Canon Dr John Hall, Devon Faith and Belief Forum; and Dina Mandalia, Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group.

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