

YOUNG PEOPLE
& INTER FAITH ENGAGEMENT

Young Voices, Young Agents for Change



Inter faith activity
developed by and
with young people

13 November 2014
A Report



Young Voices, Young Agents for Change

A special event to profile and boost youth inter faith engagement

On 13 November 2014, the Inter Faith Network for the UK brought together over 80 participants from a wide range of organisations to share good practice in inter faith activity and education developed by, with and for young people and to discuss how to increase involvement of young people in inter faith activity more widely.



The event, *Young Voices, Young Agents for Change*, took place at the Coin Street Community Centre in London. The event, and digital resources developed from it, were made possible through the generous support of the Church Urban Fund; Golden Tours Foundation; National Association of SACREs; Inter Faith Youth Trust; and Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, as well as by the Department for Communities and Local Government through its strategic grant support of the work of IFN. The Near Neighbours programme supported attendance of a number of staff and volunteers from the wide-ranging youth programmes working with it.

Why was the event held?

Our world is increasingly interconnected and Britain is home to people of many different faiths and non-religious beliefs. In many areas of the four nations of the UK there are high, and growing, levels of diversity.

It is enormously important for the wellbeing of our society – and our wider world – that people of different backgrounds interact well with each other and that they have the opportunities, education and encouragement to do so. This is true of people of all ages, and the Inter Faith Network for the UK and its member bodies work actively to create these opportunities.

Over the last ten years, there has been a significant increase in inter faith learning and other activity run by, for and with young people and the emergence of initiatives with this as their special focus, but very little opportunity for sharing of good practice or discussion about how to build on this.

Front cover, left to right: Zakarya Anwar, Nehemiah Foundation; Charlotte Connell, Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors; Harry Barnes, Art Beyond Belief; Mona Matharu, IFN volunteer

Left: Kuldeep Basudev, Balaji Temple Youth Inter Faith Programme; Elliot Steinberg, Mitzvah Day Trust; and M Fahad Amir Zamen, Catalyst Programme

Below: Rebecca Brookman, Near Neighbours West London



A day for learning and sharing

The Inter Faith Network therefore arranged a special event to bring together young people involved in running and taking part in inter faith initiatives and adults working with young people through inter faith organisations, Religious Education in schools, youth organisations and through Higher and Further Education institutions and other organisations and projects working in this area to:

- profile some of the excellent inter faith youth activity that is already happening and stimulate more;
- give practitioners a chance to share good practice and to discuss ways to encourage more organisations and individuals to become involved; and
- open the door to further cooperative working which will benefit young people in local communities and also in schools, and institutions of Further Education and Higher Education.

A list of participating bodies is at the end of this report.

The size of the event was designed to ensure that there could be small scale conversations and in depth discussion of issues.

The day's proceedings

The day included an exhibition of display materials about the work with young people of 35 organisations; plenary presentations; plenary discussion; and small group discussion with opening inputs on the group's theme. It was chaired by IFN's Co-Chairs, the Rt Revd Richard Atkinson and Vivian Wineman.

The morning session opened with an overview presentation from IFN's Director Dr Harriet Crabtree on the shape of the day and the topic in the context of inter faith engagement more generally.

The day continued with presentations from young practitioners: Aamna Alam of Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors (a project linked to Bolton Interfaith Council); Megan Wallace on Interfaith Scotland's schools work; and Ankit Sinha on Redbridge Ambassadors of Faith and Belief's work with primary schools. They shared their experiences of engaging with and running inter faith initiatives, including the ways in which their youth-led work serves other young people, and the ways in which adult workers support the initiatives.

Megan Wallace and Ankit Sinha discussed how through their initiatives young people go into schools to offer a personal experience of a particular religion and to talk with pupils, engaging in a direct and wide-ranging way. Aamna Alam gave an insight into a pioneering inter faith scheme, linked to a local inter faith council, which enables young people to make a practical difference in their local community and to develop key skills along the way.

All three youth plenary presentations are available to view in full at <http://youth.interfaith.org.uk/resources/presentations>.



Top: Matthew Youde, United Religions Initiative



Above: Peter and Jean Rookes, 'Faiths for Fun' project

The Inter Faith Network for the UK closed in 2024, with outward facing operations ceasing in April.

In order to ensure that the material in IFN's publications remained available to the public, to inter faith practitioners, and to scholars after IFN's closure, the copyright status of publications has been changed.

Except where otherwise noted, text content in this publication described as Copyright of the Inter Faith Network for the UK is now licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License](#). Unless noted otherwise, the text of guest speakers' presentations remains the copyright the speaker, and any non-textual content (eg photographs) remains copyright the Inter Faith Network for the UK or as stated.

The afternoon saw presentations from adults involved in supporting various areas of inter faith activity and education involving young people: Rachel Silveira, Deputy Director of 3FF (Three Faiths Forum); Isabelle King, Innovation and Sustainability Manager, National Council for Voluntary Youth Services; Raheed Salam, National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education; and Joyce Miller, Chair of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. Between them, the presenters have a wealth of experience of work across the spectrum of inter faith and educational work with young people, and were able to draw on this to offer examples of good practice within their respective fields and more widely.

Ms Silveira spoke of the need for an open and inclusive approach in keeping with 3FF's perception of inter faith and intercultural activity as a response to the challenges faced by society, particularly disconnections, isolation, mistrust and understanding. She emphasised the importance of care with language: "Young people can't be called 'the future' or 'those people' or treated like a different group. They need to be part of the 'us' and the 'we' and the 'now'." She commented on the importance of fitting activities to young people and their needs and also providing incentives to participate through this and through opportunities which will make them wish to be involved. She underlined the need for people working in this field to think strategically and cooperatively and suggested that work be done to define what we think is good practice in inter faith activity with young people.

Isabelle King outlined the work of the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS). Somewhere between 20–25% of its member bodies are, or would be seen as, faith organisations (although not all such bodies class themselves in that way). NCVYS had recently re-kickstarted its faith programme with a new network of organisations primarily focusing on tackling workforce qualifications and skills. Ms King spoke of how effective it can be when young people are involved in training the workers and the workforce using approaches like hot topics, such as the environment. She called for engagement in this key area of work by youth organisations, youth focused organisations and youth sector groups as well as faith based organisations, with much more engagement between them, noting that NCVYS was very happy to start working to make that connection.

Raheed Salam explained the role of the National Council for Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education, (formerly the National Ecumenical Agency in Further Education). FBFE helps with provision of strategies to help people discuss faith and belief in the context of *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education* and the challenges of embedding that within FE curriculums where there is no requirement to teach RE. Even so, young people of faith and of non-faith are talking about their spirituality and their moral and cultural and social identity. He spoke of the work needing to be done to develop the non-academic aspect of young people: soft skills development, citizenship or community cohesion.



**Top: Ankit Sinha,
Ambassadors of Faith and
Belief, Redbridge**

**Above: Lesley Prior, National
Association of SACREs**

FBFE's work with staff fosters three core attitudes: self-awareness, respect for all and open-mindedness. These provide a good basis to speak to young people about faith and belief.

Joyce Miller opened by talking about the training of teachers, noting the Westhill system of assessment based on Concepts, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge: CASK. She saw those four areas as absolutely essential in Religious Education and each of them is as pertinent to inter faith understanding as well. Conceptual understanding, rather than simple gathering of knowledge is crucial in RE and in inter faith understanding. Attitudes are important and they have to be in the ethos of a school and in the ethos of classroom practice that is agreed, and is respectful. What is needed is an informed, discerning respect and attitudes such as curiosity, engagement, and willingness to learn which are at the heart of both RE and inter faith understanding. The most important skills are about thinking and reflection and critical engagement; learning how to ask some very hard questions; learning how to challenge and be challenged without being offensive. Knowledge is also vital – and that needs to be pursued in a questioning way which gets past preconceptions and misconceptions. Questions, attitudes, skills, concepts: on its own none of them works but together they can form a very sound foundation for RE and for inter faith understanding. As a final reflection, Dr Miller talked of enabling children to become skilled 'intercultural navigators' who would be comfortable moving across religions, across faiths, across beliefs and being able to ask and talk and engage in dialogue and learn.

Presentations were followed by question and answer time and more general plenary discussion. This enabled all those attending the event to share their own examples of good practice, as well as to discuss challenges, visions for the future, and to ask specific questions.

The presentation texts can be found on a microsite developed from the day at <http://youth.interfaith.org.uk/resources/presentation-transcripts>.

Discussion groups were a very important part of the day. The topics were:

- Developing and deepening skills for engagement in inter faith projects and leadership – facilitated by Eric Appleby, Chief Executive, Encompass (The Daniel Braden Reconciliation Trust) with opening inputs from Bolton Inter Faith Young Ambassadors Charlotte Connell and Meera Solanki and from Zakarya Anwar, Nehemiah Foundation, Burnley



Top: Vivian Wineman, Co-Chair, IFN and Aamna Alam, Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors

Above: Megan Wallace and Sophie Hall, Interfaith Scotland (Schools Programme)

- Schools and inter faith understanding – facilitated by Lesley Prior, Chair, National Association of SACREs with opening inputs from Moenes Mahmutefendic and Ankit Sinha of Redbridge Ambassadors of Faith and Belief and Sophie Hall, Interfaith Scotland
- Inter faith activity and education in the context of youth organisations – facilitated by Jo Hobbs, Director of Guiding Services, Girlguiding with opening inputs from Dr Peter and Mrs Jean Rookes, County Development Advisers, Birmingham Scout Association and ‘Faiths for Fun Day Project’; and Isabelle King, National Council for Voluntary Youth Services and Neil Martin, CEO of the Jewish Lads’ and Girls’ Brigade and Chair of the Inter Faith Youth Trust.
- Inter faith activity led by and engaging young adults in Higher and Further Education – facilitated by Sukhi Kainth, Project Manager, Campus Cohesion, Faith and Belief, National Union of Students with opening inputs from Bension Tilley, Youth Volunteer, Joseph Interfaith Foundation and the Revd Dr James Walters, Chaplain, LSE.
- Youth inter faith engagement in a social action context – facilitated by Rebecca Brookman, Coordinator, Near Neighbours West London with opening inputs from Kuldeep Basudev, Inter Faith Youth Group and Project, Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple, Sandwell; and Safia Noor, National Citizens Service.
- Building bridges through culture and sport – facilitated by Paresh Solanki, Development Director, Hindu Christian Forum with opening inputs from Viva Msimang, Rowan Arts project: *A Young Person’s Guide to Religion*, which brought together 40 young people aged 11–25 to tell the story of four religions in Islington; and Harry Barnes, Sacred Spaces Project, a collaboration between the Wisdom Project based at Eton Dorney and Art Beyond Belief, which uses video to explore what makes a place, an object or a situation sacred.
- Potential, practicalities and challenges – facilitated by Tim Fawssett, CEO, The Feast with opening inputs from Dr Justine Huxley, Director, St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace and Matthew Youde, Associate Director of Global Programmes and Youth Leadership Development, United Religions Initiative.

The groups each gave brief feedback of key points into the afternoon plenary session, and this was followed by discussion. A summary of key points emerging out of the day is on the microsite and at Annex 2 to this report. In a number of cases, those present expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage across the different types of organisation working in this field and for more joined-up working.

The day was planned from the outset to gain higher visibility through launching national Inter Faith Week; a strong social media dimension; and an ongoing legacy in the form of a microsite with materials from the day and pointers to encourage more organisations and individuals to get involved in youth inter faith activity.



Above: Neil Martin, Jewish Lads’ and Girls’ Brigade and Inter Faith Youth Trust

Below: Mona Matharu, volunteer at IFN





Inter Faith Week

The event was chosen by IFN to launch Inter Faith Week in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (which began the weekend immediately following the Thursday event) and this gave added profile to the event.

Social Media

Tweeting was encouraged using the hashtag #VYAC, and tweets were displayed on the screens in the main plenary room at various points throughout the day. IFN also posted about the event on Facebook and its Director wrote a related piece for the Jewish News 'inter faith channel' being launched in Inter Faith Week. DCLG chose the photograph of the VYAC participants launching Inter Faith Week to illustrate a news release from Secretary of State Eric Pickles about the channel and this gave even wider visibility.

Above: Launch of national Inter Faith Week

Below: Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala, Vice Chair and Bishop Richard Atkinson, Co-Chair of IFN

Feedback on the day

Bishop Richard Atkinson, in the chair at the end of the day, spoke, no doubt for many, when he said "I've been reminded, as we all have, of the importance of the 'voice' of young people. It's been good to be reminded about the importance of 'space'... and the focus on how we get conversation at all age groups about the hard questions and the things that actually matter in our world."

Feedback on the event was sought from all participants by email. It was very positive.



Building on the day

Immediate outcomes

The day had a number of immediate outcomes: direct learning, gaining new connections and forming a basis for possible future partnership working, and profiling of work through display material on the day. However, as noted earlier in this report, it was also designed to:

- profile some of the excellent inter faith youth activity that is already happening and stimulate more;
- give practitioners a chance to share good practice and to discuss ways to encourage more organisations and individuals to become involved; and
- open the door to further cooperative working which will benefit young people in local communities and also in schools, and institutions of Further Education and Higher Education.

Digital resource

<http://youth.interfaith.org.uk>

From the outset of planning, a linked online resource was planned. This is a 'microsite' within the IFN website which carries materials from the day. It is a resource to encourage local communities and organisations to develop inter faith activity and education with and for young people, and to do so in ways which draw on good practice within the field.

The microsite highlights the initiatives that took part in the event, as well as key points emerging from the good practice examples shared on the day and in the discussion.

The site signposts the different bodies who took part, and links across to their websites, giving visitors to the site an overview of the different kinds of body engaged in this work, as well as a quick way to find out more information about them. It also includes key points from the day and various video materials. IFN hopes it will be a valuable reference point for anyone thinking about initiating an inter faith project involving young people.

Videos of the presentations in plenary by the three youth presenters are included on the microsite. A longer video, drawing together some of the key themes of the day, is being added.

A number of short vox pop video clips were made from filmed interviews carried out for IFN by Brett-Lesage and have been uploaded onto Youtube and included within the microsite. There is also a photo gallery.



Top: The Revd Dr James Walters, Chaplain, London School of Economics; Bension Tilley, Joseph Interfaith Foundation; and Sukhi Kainth, National Union of Students

Above: The Young People and Inter Faith Engagement microsite (video clip: Bhupinder Singh, Inter Faith Youth Trust)

Concluding reflections and thoughts for the future

A number of themes seemed to shine through many of the key points from the day.

The first was, simply, *the great importance of increasing inter faith understanding, respect and positive relationships* – whether developed through structured learning (such as RE and particular programmes); opportunities to meet and talk; social action projects; or other routes.

Most of those at the event were already engaged in some way in this.

However, there was a recognition that *many potentially relevant organisations are not already playing a role in helping young people develop inter faith understanding and to be part of cooperative projects. Thought needs to be given to how to widen involvement.*

A strong theme in discussion at various points was that *greater joined-up working between the various types of organisation working in this area would help raise the profile of it and also encourage more involvement and support.* Several contributors noted a particular disconnection between ‘secular’ and ‘faith-based’ youth work. This event brought together organisations from both types of organisation, as well as those whose sole focus is ‘inter faith’ and bodies whose whole locus is educational. More such opportunities for engagement are needed.

A second major theme of the day might perhaps be described as ‘mutuality and common cause’. *Young participants and old, alike, were keen to stress the benefits of understanding their interaction on inter faith matters in a reciprocal way.* Yes, young people have particular needs and a special contribution to make. Yes, adults (or older adults) are usually in the roles of managing and guiding projects. But *young people have much to teach older workers and volunteers and can play a very important role in the design and leadership of programmes.* The usefulness of involving young people in the training of youth workers/ volunteers was underlined – as was listening to their views on programmes. The reciprocal nature of learning and the importance of humility was underlined time and again. This was true of those speaking out of their experiences in Religious Education contexts, where teachers and pupils both have a role educating and



Above: The Revd Elizabeth Carnelley, Near Neighbours and Harry Barnes, Art Beyond Belief

Below: Rachel Silveira, 3FF



learning with one another and was also mentioned by others working in contexts such as national inter faith programmes.

The *development of skills and confidence for inter faith engagement and also for 'leadership'* was another important topic. This came through the presentations and discussions about different projects. The beneficialness of projects which offer opportunities to engage but also help participants learn new skills and leadership along the way was highlighted by numerous speakers.

Identity was another theme which threaded through the day. We are on a journey of development throughout our lives – most intensely during our earlier years. The importance of encounters during this formative period were noted. So, too, was the importance of avoiding putting people in tidy identity boxes and also of remembering that *non-religious beliefs need to be thought about as well as faith* and that, for some, the language of 'intercultural' can seem more appropriate.

'Fun' was a feature of a number of successful programmes talked about during the day. Inter faith engagement need not be dry or dull. However, some young participants particularly stressed the seriousness and significance of their concerns for society and the world *and engaging alongside others of different backgrounds as part of making common cause* as fellow citizens for the wellbeing of humanity.

The points raised during the day underlined the importance of thinking 'intergenerationally' rather than thinking of young people as an entirely separate category. They also emphasised the many benefits of working together across different faiths and beliefs to make a positive impact in local communities.

IFN's Trustees will be considering, later this year, the possibility of further work to support this important area.



**Above: Zakarya Anwar,
Nehemiah Foundation**

**Below left: Jessica Fisher,
Girlguiding**



ANNEX 1

The Inter Faith Network for the UK and youth inter faith engagement



Helping increase the involvement of young people in inter faith learning, bridge-building and cooperation has long been a key concern of the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN).

IFN was set up in 1987. Its vision is of “a society where there is understanding of the diversity and richness of the faith communities in the UK and the contribution that they make; and where we live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good.”

It helps to support the development of understanding and cooperation through:

- working with faith communities, inter faith organisations, educators and others to increase understanding and cooperation between people of different faiths and to widen public awareness of the distinctive religious traditions in the UK; and
- supporting and encouraging inter faith initiatives and sharing good practice between these; helping create opportunities for mutual learning and tackling prejudice; and offering opportunity for engagement between faith communities and Government and other public agencies on relevant issues.

IFN links in membership a range of organisations working to build understanding and increase engagement between people of different faiths. Its member bodies work in a wide variety of ways to achieve these goals. Part of the role of IFN is to provide opportunities for those working in the inter faith field to share information and good practice, and to discuss challenges and opportunities. Toward this end, it organises regular meetings for its member bodies to come together, often grouped by the type of the organisations attending. However, from time to time,



Above left: Viva Msimang, Rowan Arts; Beti Alemseged, Nehemiah Foundation; and Paresh Solanki, Hindu Christian Forum

Above right: Raheed Salam, National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education

IFN also holds meetings focussing on particular themes or emerging areas of inter faith engagement. These meetings often bring together a wider range of participants, going beyond the membership of IFN and including others working in those areas.

During its first decade, IFN worked with faith communities and those in the field of RE on a number of projects and events with a youth inter faith dimension, including exploration of RE and Collective Worship, arranging a special meeting for teenagers with the Archbishop of Canterbury to discuss their experiences of tolerance and intolerance, and with the Vice-Chancellors of UK Universities and NUS to begin raising awareness on campus of the importance of good inter faith relations.

IFN brought young voices to the fore in the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities of the UK at the House of Lords which was organised by it with Government as one of the official events opening the new Millennium and it went on to work with Government to arrange a special youth inter faith forum on the theme 'Faith and service to the community' to mark the Golden Jubilee in 2002 and, two years later, with the National Youth Agency and TimeBank to publish *Connect: Different Faiths, Shared Values: A youth action guide*.

The *Connect* guide has been widely used by schools and youth groups and went into several reprints as well as being available online. It was among the factors that helped kick-start a much wider involvement of young people in inter faith activity.

A number of more recent activities have also contributed to this, such as IFN national meetings on *Connecting for the Future: Young People and Inter Faith Relations in Britain* and *Good Inter Faith Relations: the Next Generation*; a seminar with the Citizenship Foundation: *Faith, Identity and Belonging: Educating for Shared Citizenship*; a number of events and projects with bodies such as the RE Council for England and Wales; the National Association of SACREs; and NATRE; publication of an e-resource *Young People and Inter Faith Engagement*; and work over a number of years on students and good relations on campus, with the NUS and with the Equality Challenge Unit and with particular youth organisations, such as Girlguiding, on inter faith dimensions of their work.

For 2014 IFN encouraged those holding events for national Inter Faith Week in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (on which it leads) to consider a youth and intergenerational aspect to their event.

The microsite carries links to relevant past publications.



Top: Charlotte Connell, Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors

Above: Harriet Ackunson, Department for Communities and Local Government and the Revd Tim Clapton, Near Neighbours East London

List of organisations which participated in the Young Voices, Young Agents of Change event

3FF (Three Faiths Forum)

Art Beyond Belief

Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple, Tivendale – Youth Inter Faith Programme

Bolton Inter Faith Council

Bolton Interfaith Young Ambassadors

Bradford Inter Faith Education Centre

Catalyst – Near Neighbours Young Leaders Programme

Department for Communities and Local Government

Encompass Trust (Daniel Braden Reconciliation Trust)

Faiths for Fun Day – Birmingham Scouts and Birmingham Council of Faiths

The Feast

Girlguiding

Golden Tours Foundation

Hindu Christian Forum

Inter Faith Youth Trust (Alma Royalton-Kisch Trust)

Interfaith Scotland (Schools programme)

Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade

Joseph Interfaith Foundation

London School of Economics Faith Centre and Chaplaincy

Maimonides Interfaith Foundation

Mitzvah Day Trust

National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)

National Citizen Service

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (FBFE)

National Union of Students (NUS)

National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE)

Near Neighbours

Near Neighbours East London

Near Neighbours West London

Nehemiah Foundation

Redbridge Ambassadors of Faith and Belief

Religions for Peace UK

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

Rowan Arts

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace

Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource

United Religions Initiative (URI)

Unity of Faiths Foundation

Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit

Woking People of Faith

World Congress of Faiths

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Exhibiting only

Peace Mala

Sewa Day

Step Up To Serve

Key points from the day

The following list of key points reflects comments and observations offered by individual participants during the *Young Voices, Young Agents for Change* event. Together with the records of the plenary presentations and video clips from the day, we hope these points will be useful to organisations and individuals working to learn from and increase involvement of young people in inter faith activity and learning.

The points are ordered by topic and not in order of importance. They are numbered for ease of reference.

The importance of inter faith engagement

1. Positive inter faith engagement is vital in today's world
2. It is important to create space for dialogues and engagement to foster understanding

An increasingly diverse and interconnected world

3. We all live in a world that is ever more interconnected – instant, free communication with any populated area of the world is possible
4. The world has become smaller – the UK is more multicultural and global communication is easier than ever
5. Social media and the internet are huge influences on people's attitudes and opinions.
6. People's frames of reference are much wider than their traditional communities now and it can be challenging to support young people when the things that influence them are changing daily

Young people and inter faith engagement

7. All faiths value young people and renewal
8. Inter faith and inter cultural engagement is important for people of all ages
9. Young people may have different needs and particular ways of contributing but we/they should not be thought of as totally separate and different
10. Young people cannot be thought of just as the future we/they are both future and present bridge builders
11. Young people have a particular contribution to make
12. Young people often bring a passion, optimism, and sense of possibility that older people may feel they have lost along the way (whether or not they have)
13. Young people care about big issues – climate change, poverty, injustice in the world and in their neighbourhoods – and it is important to support them in the work they aspire to in these areas
14. Older adults have to be careful that they do not end up speaking for young people rather than speaking with and listening to them

Developing confidence , leadership, skills and responsibility

15. Young people need the confidence to be themselves and to act accordingly and with openness about themselves and to others
16. Young people also need the confidence to develop skills such as public speaking, facilitation and other leadership skills and they need support in developing these skills and to be given the responsibility to just have a go and – if necessary – to learn by mistakes with someone backing them up
17. Young people should be involved in training older people in how to work with them – this two-way relationship of learning helps the older people, and it also helps the younger people feel they have more ownership
18. Having young people involved in the training ensures that they are there to ask the sorts of questions they would ask in a project so that the workers can experience real engagement first-hand before they start working in the field
19. Projects should be youth-led, but not entirely – guidance from adults and sharing of experience is important
20. It is important to allow younger people to give feedback, direction and advice to adult workers whilst those are also giving support to the young people
21. Striking the right balance between experienced support and youth ownership and leadership is always hard but it is important
22. URI International has structures which are engineered to provide pathways for young people to accept and access positions on goals and to lead programmes and develop the skills as they go
23. The uniformed organisations [eg Scouts and Guides] have built-in leadership schemes which begin at the earliest age and are staged to help young people continue to develop as leaders as they grow.
24. Inter faith chaplaincy teams can provide a good model for inter generational inter faith – in the Christian context, this is a model of ‘walking with’ and saying “Come and see. You might be interested in this. Come and have a look”
25. Succession planning is critical, and this begins with encouraging younger people to engage with structures and allowing them to help to shape them
26. Faiths have within them concepts around inter-generational relationships: concepts such as transmission of faith, continuity of community, different life stages, and duties toward elders, which can be instructive when thinking about how programmes for young people can be structured.
27. Having young people involved in decision making processes in a realistic way is critical and this means going where they are, not expecting them to come to us (for example, recognising that they prefer not to sit through long meetings)

Young people getting involved in non-youth-focused inter faith bodies

- 28. The average age of many inter faith bodies is very high and they will benefit from allowing young people to give them more direction, feedback, and advice.
- 29. People who are more experienced should support and mentor young people to empower them, delegate responsibility and enable a gradual passing on of responsibilities to them.
- 30. Local inter faith bodies benefit from involving young people in their work and can provide a place for learning new skills
- 31. A young person on the board/committee of an inter faith body may attract more young people to be involved.

Developing programmes

- 32. It is always necessary to contextualise and adapt activities to fit the audience and be as creative and participatory as possible.
- 33. If something is fun, people will want to do it, whatever their age.
- 34. If something is fun it will engage people; social interaction and political terminology can be off-putting.
- 35. Young people are not just interested in fun activities; they want to make a difference to the world.
- 36. There is a need for creativity and not just reinventing the wheel.
- 37. It is difficult often for young people to travel long distances and youth events need to be held in different places.
- 38. Inter-generational inter faith activity may most naturally follow from youth inter faith activity for young people who come from faith contexts where they have had no prior experience of inter faith activity
- 39. Arts and culture can help to bring people together because they transcend barriers such as language.
- 40. Getting to know people takes time; you can't speed up building relationships of trust
- 41. Arts competitions and shows with young people can help to engage older audiences as they will often invite their family along to support them.
- 42. The term 'inter faith' is sometimes useful but in some contexts can put people off – there seems no obvious alternative to it but it may need explaining carefully if there is the potential for misunderstanding.
- 43. A SUSOMAD Project in Bradford, Stand Up: Speak Out; Make a Difference, has young people engaging with national and international political issues that are of concern to them

Religious Education, peer-to-peer learning and religious understanding more generally

44. Religious Education makes a vital contribution to pupils' ability to navigate and engage well with people of different backgrounds in an increasingly diverse world
45. The role of RE teachers is a key one and their training is very important
46. Concepts, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge are absolutely essential in Religious Education and each of them is pertinent to inter faith understanding as well
47. RE includes finding ways to enable children to say what they want to say – thus developing skills of dialogue and engagement that are so important
48. In RE there are general skills about learning but the most important skills are about thinking and reflection and critical engagement – learning how to ask some very hard questions, learning how to challenge and be challenged without being offensive
49. An undiscerning respect for difference is no good for anybody – we need an informed, discerning respect
50. Openness, curiosity, engagement, and willingness to learn, are at the heart of both RE and inter faith understanding.
51. RE can help enable pupils to become skilled inter faith and intercultural navigators
52. SACREs make an important contribution to RE in schools and to inter faith understanding
53. Young people of faith talking to school pupils as part of RE classes gives them a personal experience and a human face to engage with, helping break down stereotypes
54. Pupils can relate to younger presenters in RE who are closer to them in age and speaking from their personal experiences of their own faith and are not seen as authority figures
55. Training and support from adults – including teachers – really helps young people build up the confidence and skills to present to younger pupils about their faith and experiences
56. People of any age can give pupils a personal story or experience about faiths, but younger people doing this perhaps removes some barriers as the pupils don't feel like they are being tested
57. Personal experiences are important but are not a replacement for RE
58. There is no RE curriculum in Further Education, so young people in FE may have less access to training and knowledge in this area than young people who continue their studies in schools
59. If you need and you want other people to understand you and your faith then you have to understand it yourself and how it affects your life and decisions and choices.

Further and Higher Education contexts

- 60. NUS has responded to the initial anxieties on campuses around external speakers and young people being radicalised and this Government agenda and it's progressed beyond that to looking at it more holistically about issues around hate crime and issues around identity, faith and sexuality
- 61. Young people are talking about their faith, their non-religious beliefs and their spirituality in Further Education contexts, and they are often being supported by staff, including chaplains, who are prepared to go beyond their main role and facilitate those kinds of discussions – but there is no formally established place for that engagement
- 62. Students have identified the importance of trusting the organisations that come in to run inter faith projects at universities, and that these will create a safe forum for expressing their views
- 63. When organising face-to-face dialogue meetings it is important to go beyond issues that everyone agrees on and to look at challenging issues. In this context, the 'safe forum' aspect is very important
- 64. Chaplaincies play a very important role in supporting inter faith learning and engagement among students
- 65. A key part of chaplaincy work is ensuring all students, of whatever faith or belief, feel the chaplaincy is a safe space in which they can be open about their views and listened to.

Skills, confidence and personal identity

- 66. Young people need the confidence to be who they are and be respected for it
- 67. Being involved in inter faith projects helps you grow in your own faith as well as learning about others
- 68. Young people are often operating in a broader space in terms of their self-identification
- 69. A person's faith or belief will have a profound impact on who they are as a person, and how they see themselves – even if they do not always realise the extent to which they are shaped by it
- 70. Single faith youth work is important in giving young people from faith communities the confidence to be themselves, and can be a helpful stepping stone to inter faith engagement, including through single-faith groups from different faiths working together on particular initiatives
- 71. It is much better to ask someone why they do or do not do certain things than to make an assumption – having the confidence to ask people questions about their faith takes practice and some prior knowledge but is an important skill to learn
- 72. People of all ages can engage in inter faith activity best when they understand their own faith and their relationship to their tradition well – intra-faith dialogue has a part to play in that too
- 73. Young people come from different backgrounds and places, faiths or beliefs. Supporting them involves looking through the lens of each particular young person, seeing the journey they are on, recognising their needs and requirements in taking first steps to engage with others.

74. Presenting to others about your faith forces you to learn more about it – you don't want to feel unprepared for questions

75. Sometimes you will not know the answers to the questions asked, and it is okay to say that. It will also make you want to go away and find out

Sustainability

76. More sources of funding need to be found for youth inter faith activity

77. More grant giving bodies need encouraging to support this area of work

78. Joint bids would be good – particularly for European funding programmes

79. There are many opportunities to run one-off projects, including social action projects, with young people, but it is more challenging to find ways to sustain these throughout the year

80. Not all events and initiatives require money – volunteers and in-kind support such as free use of venues can enable some excellent initiatives

81. Sustaining long-term year-round programmes, particularly those with broad programmes of work involving thousands of users, which need staff and interns, needs money as the time-commitment involved makes it impossible to run purely on a voluntary basis

Sharing and cooperative working

82. There is a need for better communication between youth groups and faith groups organising things

83. We should not be afraid to ask people how they have achieved something if we see a brilliant project, and discuss how it might be replicated or altered to fit other contexts

84. It is important to organise, to work together more, to challenge each other on the spaces we are working in and, rather than competing, thinking through strategically what will enable the most to get done in the field

85. There is presently a lack of engagement between the faith-based youth sector and the rest of the youth sector – workers are not attending each others' events, conferences etc. in significant numbers

86. There is a need for more joined-up working by different types of organisations developing and supporting youth inter faith activity and learning

87. There are many spaces for young people to have a voice and get involved in things, but often those running programmes stick within their own sector – everybody who works with young people should be sharing ideas and experiences and having a conversation

88. A challenge to those working and volunteering on inter faith initiatives with young people is whether to invest in defining good inter faith activity with young people – are there benchmarks we need to agree on?

-
89. Perhaps there could be a code of practice based on the learning of organisations such as those at today's event and with the input of young people
90. It is often difficult to find funding for inter faith initiatives with young people – funders of youth activity often see it as something that funders of faith activity should fund, and funders of faith activity may not be interested in funding youth inter faith activity
91. We should work collectively to increase funders' awareness and interest in this area
92. It is important to provide space for conversations between young people and real engagement, but also help to develop a counter-narrative to some of the wider influences on their ideas and opinions – this requires a strategic engagement between all sectors influencing a young person's journey.
93. Young people go on one single journey from primary school to graduation or work and but the large number of people and organisations trying to influence that journey are not engaging with each other – greater engagement between all working with young people would enable a more cohesive, holistic approach and perhaps one more responsive to each young person's journey.

Faith based bodies working in wider civil society

94. Faith based bodies and inter faith bodies need to link up well with secular young organisations, to make common cause and work effectively together to increase young people's involvement in inter faith activity and to help develop their skills for this
95. When faith organisations work with civil society, with secular organisations, we should not play down the faith element of what we do: we have a set of values; a set of moral principles that are very important to society.

Supported by



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



Published 2015
by the Inter Faith Network for the UK
(registered charity no 1068934 and company limited
by guarantee no 3443823 registered in England)

2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH
ifnet@interfaith.org.uk
www.interfaith.org.uk

ISBN 1 902906 60 8

Copyright © Inter Faith Network for the UK 2015

