

Local Inter Faith Organisations and Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education: Working together for understanding and community cohesion

Report on a seminar held by the Inter Faith
Network for the UK and the National
Association of SACREs

on 12 June 2009
at the Elmbank Centre, Coventry



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Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) was founded in 1987 to 'advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in Britain' and to promote good relations between people of different faiths in the UK. IFN links over 170 member bodies including: national representative bodies of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian faiths; national, regional, local and other inter faith bodies; and academic institutions and educational bodies concerned with inter faith issues.

www.interfaith.org.uk

National Association of SACREs (Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education)

NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) is a voluntary national association founded in 1993. It links 154 local SACREs in England and the Channel Islands and, latterly, the SACRE for Service Children's Education in Germany. It speaks for SACREs, organises conferences, issues the termly SACRE News, provides advice and support and works with other agencies in the field of religious education. Its current activities include holding national and regional meetings for SACRE members, recruiting and training SACRE members from minority faith groups, and giving annual awards to SACREs for inter faith projects involving young people.

www.nasacre.org.uk

Foreword

Across the last few years, the significance within our society of religious identity and the importance of inter faith understanding have been increasingly recognised. Local inter faith organisations (LIFOs) and Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) make, in distinctive but complementary ways, a key contribution to helping people of all ages to develop understanding of different faiths and to encouraging positive interaction between people of different backgrounds in their localities.

SACREs exist primarily to advise their local authority on matters relating to Religious Education and Collective Worship in the authority's maintained schools. In order to carry out this role, representatives from many stakeholder groups, including faith communities, are brought together to work collaboratively. This indirectly and coincidentally promotes good inter faith relations, and indeed provides a distinctive example of inter faith engagement, but this is a felicitous by-product of the work of SACREs rather than being part of their original rationale. They are also able to encourage and support the inclusion within the Local Agreed Syllabus of study of inter faith issues.

LIFOs exist to foster inter faith understanding and multi faith cooperation on social issues. As part of this work they have a clear interest in, and commitment to, increasing understanding by people of different religious traditions. This means that their work has a natural interrelationship with that of SACREs in this vital area.

The roles of LIFOs and SACREs are different but they can be of real value to one another in taking forward their work. This is particularly the case now that in England the non-statutory national framework for RE commends the study of inter faith issues and the statutory duty on maintained schools to promote community cohesion points to even stronger engagement with local communities as well as care for good inter faith engagement within schools.

This report records the proceedings of a day seminar held by the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) and the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) in consultation with the RE Council for England and Wales and with the support of the Saltley Trust. The seminar also formed part of the series of 'Soundings' events which IFN is holding across 2009–2011, looking at issues in the field of contemporary inter faith dialogue and engagement in the UK today.

The seminar looked at the roles and activities of SACREs and LIFOs and what steps can be taken to increase opportunities for joint working between them. It is prefaced by a list of 'key points' which relate to this key theme of the seminar.

The Report also incorporates analyses of two parallel surveys sent to LIFOs and SACREs by IFN and NASACRE, respectively. The surveys explored in some depth the levels of mutual awareness of and engagement between LIFOs and SACREs; what joint working is currently happening;

factors which can inhibit or strengthen such working; and ideas of respondents for areas of future joint work.

We hope that the day's proceedings and this report and what flows from them will make a useful contribution to the ongoing extremely important work of SACREs and LIFOs and, through them, to the development of inter faith understanding among not only school students but also people of all ages in their areas.



Harriet Crabtree, OBE
Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK



Bill Moore
Chair, National Association of SACREs

February 2010

Key points

The following list of key points is not exhaustive. It does not seek to summarise the detailed reflections offered in presentations and discussion at the day seminar or in material in the analyses of the two surveys of local inter faith organisations (LIFOs) and of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs).

While some points relating to the nature of the two types of body are included, the focus here is on the main topic of the day: the relationship between local inter faith organisations and SACREs and, in particular, the scope for cooperative working between them and the factors which inhibit or assist this.

The day's wide-ranging discussion covered a number of other issues, such as strengthening of the work of SACREs, aspects of the teaching of RE and the wider work of local inter faith organisations. These are covered in the main record, together with greater detail about all the points below.

a) LIFOs and SACREs

- 1 LIFOs and SACREs represent all ages and different local communities. How they work together – drawing on their local expertise and strengthening inter faith dialogue, cohesion and Religious Education – is increasingly important.
- 2 LIFOs and SACREs need to look systematically at how they can work together and to explore the scope for closer partnership and joint working.
- 3 The availability of funding for SACREs' work, particularly in relation to inter faith issues, varies greatly from one place to the other. The same goes for LIFOs – whether funded by local authorities or otherwise.
- 4 The profile of both LIFOs and SACREs needs raising.
- 5 Effective communication between LIFOs and SACREs is vital because there is considerable overlap in some of the agendas they address. It is also important for local authorities to know with whom they are dealing and how both their SACRE and their local inter faith organisation can work with them on faith issues.
- 6 Areas of work where some LIFOs and SACREs are cooperating include: faith members visiting schools/visits to places of worship; Local Agreed Syllabus development; exchange of knowledge and presentation of information about faith traditions; developing local directories of faith groups and faith trails; providing joint responses to events – sometimes on a regular basis – or developing work on themes like countering extremism, local community cohesion work or events such as Holocaust Memorial Day and Islam Awareness Week; exhibitions; sixth form conferences; youth inter faith forums and other projects; and training programmes and programmes to support visitors to schools.
- 7 There is some evidence of LIFOs and SACREs carrying out work on their own or with other partners in which one might have expected joint involvement – for example on youth inter faith forums.
- 8 Both LIFOs and SACREs need to access and develop good working relationships with local religious leaders.
- 9 It can be helpful for a SACRE when there is a LIFO or faith leaders group with which they can work in partnership and which can help them find and support SACRE members.

b) What can foster complementary and partnership working?

10 The following steps were identified as helping foster mutual awareness and joint working between LIFOs and SACREs:

- a) Overlapping membership between LIFOs and SACREs enables cross flow of information and increases the likelihood of joint project working. The greater the overlap, the stronger seems to be the benefit in terms of the relationship.
- b) Careful systems for sharing information, including:
 - mutual website links
 - shared e-lists including events of interest to both bodies and also RE teachers
 - where appropriate, minutes of one body (or key points from these) being on the agenda of meetings of the other body
 - speakers from the SACRE visiting the LIFO and vice versa.
- c) Clarity on the part of the bodies themselves and of the local authority about roles and areas of joint work.
- d) A local authority with a clear sense of the roles of the two types of body and working well with both; and adequate staff time devoted to engaging with them and sharing information.
- e) Both bodies working together in the context of some other forum.

c) What factors may inhibit complementary and cooperative working?

11 The following factors were identified as inhibiting joint working:

- a) Little or no overlap of membership.
- b) Inadequate information sharing and absence of formally established and

well supported systems for information sharing and cooperative working.

- c) Lack of understanding about each other's roles and work.

12 SACREs are seen by some people in inter faith and faith organisations as hard to understand or engage with due to their complex statutory role and structures.

13 The professional world of RE can be quite different in terms of language/jargon, attitudes/perspective from the 'grassroots' views of faith community members and few who have to deal with both worlds are 'bilingual'.

14 There was recognition that there is an overlap of interests in some areas but unclarity about exactly what this is and how to work together on these areas.

15 SACRE meetings have regular business items which have to be received and discussed so there is often a lack of adequate time to build external relationships. SACREs have to carry out those activities which are set by their statutory duties and so there is very little time for members in meetings also to do collective, creative, collaborative work. Likewise many LIFOs have little spare capacity for partnership working.

16 There is often a lack of sufficient capacity to take on projects – particularly joint ones which may need extra time to set up and manage.

17 Due to the growth of interest in inter faith issues and the fact that a relatively small number of people are available to carry out related work, many people involved with SACREs and LIFOs are experiencing serious overload. This lessens the likelihood of their having time to devote to developing joint projects.

18 Lack of funding for joint work.

- 19 It can be complex to establish the joint bank account needed for some sorts of application where a local authority is not allowed to apply on behalf of both bodies. This makes joint SACRE/LIFO projects which need grant funding less likely.
- 20 Some SACREs reported that the infrequency of their meetings made it hard to respond to opportunities to work with LIFOs as the time the SACRE needed to take to consider an approach from a LIFO was too extended for joint planning to be viable. The weight of the SACRE workload also meant it was difficult to take on joint projects.
- 21 Inter faith events tending to happen at times which are inconvenient for SACRE members and to be advertised with short notice.
- 22 'Shire' SACREs and 'shire' LIFOs have a number of potential bodies of the other kind with which they can connect so patterns of engagement are complex – eg a county SACRE might find there are five LIFOs across the county with which it could engage.
- 23 There can be a geographical mismatch – for example, a LIFO with a focus on one city or town not knowing how to connect with a county SACRE and vice versa.
- 24 There is a general lack of enthusiasm – or even wariness – within some local authorities about dealing with faith issues as a whole.

d) Future joint working

- 25 In the NASACRE and IFN survey analyses a wide range of suggestions for specific projects and areas of joint work can be found, such as:
 - a) working to educate/train members of faith communities of both types of body to speak about faith issues in schools
 - b) building the capacity of faith groups to host school visits
 - c) working together to ensure the availability of good material about faiths in their areas, for schools but also for the wider community
 - d) joint projects in schools to support the RE Syllabus, including talks on the importance of inter faith dialogue
 - e) working to ensure inter faith issues are reflected in the Local Agreed Syllabus
 - f) practical steps to improve and deepen the working relationship between LIFOs and SACREs and the relationship with both of local authorities.
- 26 It was suggested that the following steps can help develop the working relationship between SACREs and LIFOs and of both with local authorities:
 - a) ensure that there are at least two or three members of SACRE who are also members of the LIFO
 - b) identify opportunities to develop mutual knowledge and understanding, for example through regular email updates
 - c) allocate time for the development of mutual understanding, eg through short presentations on issues of common concern
 - d) take care to explain different working assumptions/methodologies/agendas
 - e) aim for joined up involvement in the work of the LIFO and SACRE of the relevant local authority staff and the RE Adviser
 - f) establish good lines of communication and reporting structures between SACRE and LIFO and between each of these and the local authority.

- g) make sure that there are clear agreed understandings of the reasons for joint working, the strategy for this and the roles of the two bodies (and others) in this
- h) allow adequate timescales when planning collaborative projects to enable SACRE to be involved
- i) address financial constraints through seeking sources of funding for collaborative projects (and possibly consider a joint bank account for this purpose)
- j) where the joint working involves young people, always keep the young people themselves firmly at the heart of the vision.

there are for educating about faiths represented in their areas and what else might be helpful; and looking at ways in which even stronger joint projects can be developed.

e) Possible next steps

27 It was suggested that it might be helpful as next steps:

- a) to disseminate the seminar report as widely as possible among both SACREs and LIFOs
- b) to develop a short publication or electronic resource with clear and succinct information about the roles of the two different types of body. While each SACRE and each LIFO is in some respects unique there are some general points which can be made and which could assist members and public services wanting to know about their roles
- c) for NASACRE and IFN to provide information on funding opportunities for joint working to SACREs and inter faith organisations.
- d) to develop principles that might help SACREs and LIFOs work well together; perhaps encouraging them to meet and discuss, possibly together with their local authorities, what resources

Welcome

Bill Moore, Chair, National Association of SACREs: It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all here today.

Since we are in Coventry, David Pritchard, the Chair of Coventry SACRE, and Mehru Fitter, from Coventry Multi Faith Forum, are kindly offering us a welcome to the city.

David Pritchard, Chair, Coventry SACRE: Good morning everyone and welcome to Coventry – and welcome particularly to this building which has been a powerhouse for learning and development for Coventry teachers and Coventry workers over the last thirty or forty years and for the city as a whole.

Mehru Fitter, Coventry Multi Faith Forum: On behalf of Coventry Multi Faith Forum, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you. The Forum aims to create greater understanding of diversity in our society. Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Like the bee gathering honey from different flowers, the wise man accepts the essence of different scriptures and sees only good in all religions.” Ladies and gentlemen, that is the ultimate goal of Coventry Multi Faith Forum. Thank you very much.

Bill Moore: West Midlands SACREs and inter faith forums are represented here today as well as bodies from further afield. And we are delighted to have here Rev Dr John Hall, who is the Chair of the West Midlands Faith Forum.

Today is about local inter faith organisations and local SACREs taking a first step in looking systematically at how we can work together. Through our respective types of organisations, we represent all ages, all areas of the communities and how we work together is increasingly important.

There are, of course, already examples of

really impressive good practice going on out there – as NASACRE and the Inter Faith Network office are aware from the preliminary survey which helped inform and shape planning for this seminar. The idea is that we all build on this, drawing on our local expertise and strengthening inter faith dialogue, cohesion and Religious Education. A report on today’s seminar will be produced in due course which we hope will help this process.

NASACRE and the Inter Faith Network would like to thank a number of organisations and individuals: the Saltley Trust which has helped with funding towards the day; Denise Chaplin and Michael Metcalf of NASACRE who have put in a lot of work in organising this on behalf of NASACRE and Lynne Broadbent who assisted on the NASACRE survey analysis. From the Inter Faith Network, I would like to thank Hannah Mercer and Stella Opoku-Owusu who put in really tremendous work in setting up the arrangements for today.

The Inter Faith Network’s Director, Harriet Crabtree, will now offer some opening reflections.

Harriet Crabtree, Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK: This seminar is part of a series that the Inter Faith Network is doing called ‘Soundings’, which is looking at different issues in inter faith relations in the UK. The seminar and the work of which it forms the initial stage is a very important collaboration.

Among the Inter Faith Network’s member bodies are two with a particular concern for Religious Education in schools: the National Association of SACREs and the RE Council for England and Wales. Both of these much valued member bodies are involved today.

We approached NASACRE some while ago to explore organising this seminar because – both from the point of view of SACREs and of local inter faith organisations – the time seemed to be right for conversation about how to work even more strongly together but also to explore some questions that were arising about how the roles and remits of these two types of organisations fit together.

So today is an opportunity for exploring greater partnership. It is also, I think, about faith communities working through various routes, together with local authorities and educationalists, to make their very important contribution to good relations within society. Sometimes the faith and inter faith dimensions get missed out of thinking about ‘good relations’. Everybody in this room, of course, knows just how important this is. Today is also about finding ways to highlight the significance of your work and help people know more about it.

Bill Moore: I want to say something briefly about SACREs. They vary from place to place but have the same basic task. There is a whole range of expertise and experience within a SACRE. SACREs cover the local authority, education, teachers, the Anglican Church, and ‘other denominations and faiths’ (an expression I always find quite interesting). A SACRE is pretty much made up of adults – adults who have a commitment to inter faith dialogue but above all adults who have a commitment to children and young people. More and more in recent times ‘young people’s SACREs’ are also emerging – that is really encouraging to see. Young people’s SACREs are formal councils of young people in a local authority area that are formed on the same basis as SACREs and enable the views and experiences of children and young people to be voiced in the same way as SACREs. They will vary from LA to LA in terms of when, where and how they meet. They have no statutory role.

SACREs are concerned principally with what goes on in schools. Schools making good links with the local community and inter faith

organisations working alongside SACREs can only enrich this experience. This is of ever growing importance in our plural society and global community. So the work you are all doing and the collaboration we are talking about today are hugely important for the shared future of our communities and immensely exciting and I am sure that the day’s discussions will reflect that.

The role of SACREs and local inter faith organisations and findings from the NASACRE and Inter Faith Network surveys

Denise Chaplin and Stella Opoku-Owusu

Bill Moore: I now would like to introduce, the first presenter in our programme: Denise Chaplin. Denise was the Chair for NASACRE until earlier this month. She will talk about the work of SACREs and the results of the questionnaire that went around to SACREs in preparation for today's seminar. Then Stella Opoku-Owusu, who is the Local and Regional Inter Faith Project Officer at the Inter Faith Network, will talk about the work of local inter faith organisations and the results of the questionnaires that went out, in parallel, to inter faith groups. There will be an opportunity at the end of both presentations to ask a few questions.

The role of a SACRE

Denise Chaplin, Executive Assistant,

NASACRE: Good morning. We are going to look first at the actual individual roles of the two types of bodies so that we all understand where we are starting from.

SACREs and local authorities

A SACRE is a statutory body. It advises its local authority on the teaching of RE and provision of Collective Worship. Every local authority has to have one and, by law, the local authority has to ensure that adequate and effective support is in place for the SACRE to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

The make up of a SACRE

Each SACRE is in some ways unique. At the same time there are basic commonalities in their make up and role.

A SACRE is a forum where your local faith communities and belief communities come together through representatives. They work in partnership with the local authority and with local schools and teachers. In my SACRE in Lewisham in London we also have two representatives of school governing bodies who sit on the SACRE.

Members take a shared responsibility in building bridges of understanding and relationships that will influence the future of the whole community. Each SACRE is composed of four committees which aim to represent the interests of its local community. The local authority has to ensure that all four committees are represented on the SACRE so they have the role of chasing up the representation. They also have to ensure that there is an agreed syllabus which is reviewed every five years, and that support is in place for the SACRE to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

The four committees that make up a SACRE in England are: Christian denominations and other faiths represented in the local authority's area; The Church of England; teachers' professional associations/unions

and/or teachers in the local authority; and the Local Authority through elected Councillors. There can also be co-optees, who represent faiths or beliefs with a very small local presence. The committee of Christian denominations and other faiths represented in the local authority of course varies in make up from Local Authority to Local Authority, depending upon the demographics.

So you can see that a SACRE is not just made up of faith representatives. It has quite a diverse membership. There is absolutely no reason why members of teachers' professional associations or the local authority should be believers of anything. They could be non-believers. They do not sit on SACREs with that hat on; that is not their role.

A SACRE needs to have a flourishing membership to be able to represent the breadth of interests and to have a good supportive partnership with its local authority. It also needs to have members who are prepared to learn more about their own role and contribute positively, believing that it can make a difference.

The statutory work of SACREs

SACREs' statutory work is to monitor standards of RE, the quality of teaching and provision for RE in local schools, the effectiveness of the Local Agreed Syllabus for RE and provision and quality of collective worship in the local schools. They also advise the local authority on anything to do with RE in the 'community, voluntary controlled foundation schools' and collective worship in 'community schools'. A SACRE is also a channel for raising with the local authority concerns of faith communities or of individual schools relating to these areas.

SACREs can require the local authority to review the Agreed Syllabus for RE when necessary. They make decisions about collective worship, called 'determinations', when schools want to modify the requirements of the law relating to collective worship for a group of pupils or for the whole

school. They have to produce an annual report of their work and that is quite a substantial piece of work.

Most SACREs have also taken an interest in provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum and other areas of school life. A SACRE can also advise its local authority on the provision of training for teachers, and can give advice on methods of teaching RE including choice of teaching materials.

All four groups or committees need to work together to carry out the SACRE's work. Then the work can be balanced, informed and effective. A successful SACRE therefore has members who share with each other their knowledge, experience, their perspectives and skills and who listen to each other with respect and come to agreements that incorporate and accommodate, so far as possible, everybody's beliefs and perspectives.

The important thing about the individual members in a SACRE is how they bridge to their own interest groups, making a strong link between their community and the work of the SACRE. They should feed back to the community and they should bring the interests of the community into the SACRE. It is very important therefore that the SACRE's work is managed so that time for making those bridges is given. If papers are sent out two days before a meeting, for example, there is no opportunity for that debate and dialogue. In a SACRE that is effective, debate and dialogue happens and individual members do not feel they are on their own.

When decisions are made formally, the four committees split off to vote separately. There is one vote per committee. They each have equal voting rights, so committee A has one vote, committee B has one, C has one and D has one.

In a successful SACRE all that debate and discussion is authentic and people feel relaxed and confident. They can disagree but they are able to work through those

disagreements together. Those of you who work in this way in a SACRE will know how important it is to forge relationships strong enough for there to be space for this to happen.

SACREs have always had a crucial role in the development of community cohesion. In the past, HMIs judged SACREs by their contribution to the promotion of social and racial harmony and their partnership with the local authority, although this was not part of their statutory role. Although general development of community cohesion is not part of SACREs' statutory role they do have a contribution to make to this through building bridges and forging relationships that lead to healthy debates and discussions. In relation to the dimensions of *Face to Face and of Side by Side* adopted in the consultation of Communities and Local Government and the subsequent *report*¹, successful SACREs do both: people talk to each other and share but they also work alongside each other on common interests. So it is about making that comfortable for people and accommodating the needs of everybody in the SACRE.

Flourishing SACREs help schools and the wider faith communities to develop links with each other, helping schools and parents to understand each others' needs and are well placed to support the development of those compelling learning experiences outside the classroom, in their local area. Members of a SACRE take a shared responsibility for building bridges of understanding between communities and building relationships that will influence the future of the whole community. As Bill said, in his opening words, it is the future of the community that they – that we – are all working towards.

The role of a local inter faith organisation

Stella Opoku-Owusu, Regional and Local Inter Faith Officer, Inter Faith Network for the UK

Good morning. I would like to begin by offering a brief overview of the role of local inter faith organisations involving all or most of the main faith communities in their areas. Local inter faith organisations also include bilateral and trilateral groups such as branches of the Council of Christians and Jews and local groups of the Three Faiths Forum.

Local inter faith organisations (LIFOs) promote good inter faith relations and contribute to a greater understanding between people of different faith communities in their areas by creating opportunities for interaction and engagement.

There is, of course, a lot that can be said about local inter faith organisations! And each practitioner in the room today would no doubt tell their story a different way. But I will aim to give you an understanding of the structures of LIFOs, types of LIFOs, and finally roles. I will talk first, though, about their importance as reflected in the increase of activities over the last 20 years.

Growth in local inter faith organisations and arrival of regional forums

There has been an astonishing growth in inter faith activity across the last twenty years – especially in the last five years. Numbers of local inter faith bodies have tripled since 2000. The 2009 edition of *Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory* lists 223 local inter faith bodies including 11 bilateral and trilateral groups.

Regional Faith Forums have also come into existence in the last ten years or so and there are currently regional faith forums established in every English region with London and the North East still in the final stages of their development. A number of them are supporting, in various ways, the development of the work of LIFOs in their regions and this should help boost even further levels of local inter faith activity.

Types of local inter faith organisation

Most of the UK's local groups came into

¹ Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society, Communities and Local Government, 2008.

existence ‘organically’, emerging at the grassroots to increase dialogue and good relations. However, since the late ‘90s a good number have come into existence with the encouragement or direct involvement of local authorities or local strategic partnerships which have seen them as an important route for involving and consulting particular groups within the local community.

I will look very briefly at three broad types of local inter faith organisations that exist:

- 1 *Inter faith groups and associations*: usually relatively informal bodies where individuals of different faiths meet to learn about their respective faiths and discuss issues of common interest.
- 2 *Inter faith ‘councils’ or ‘forums’ bringing faith groups together on a broadly representative basis* – initiatives which are usually structured to include members of each major faith represented in the area (and the constitution is often designed to ensure this participation).
- 3 *Multi faith forums and partnerships and faith networks* – similar in many respects to the second type above but often set up by, or with the assistance of, local authorities or Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to create a mechanism for nominating one or more members of the Local Strategic Partnership and giving input to this and to other initiatives. Some have a significant role in regeneration or neighbourhood renewal.

There is no ‘fixed pattern’ and no ‘correct model’. And if you take a look at aims and activities of LIFOs in the *Inter Faith Organisations Directory in the UK: A Directory* or read *The Local Inter Faith Guide* you will see that names and types do not always match exactly. Some bodies called ‘groups’ function more like ‘councils’ and vice versa. But I hope this rather broad brush picture is helpful in discerning the main different types of local inter faith body and in understanding how different LIFOs are from SACREs. Unlike

SACREs, LIFOs are not statutory bodies.

Role of local inter faith bodies

Local inter faith organisations bring groups and individuals of different faiths together in such activities as:

- learning more about each others’ perspectives through talks, and visits to each others’ places of worship
- working on particular projects and events
- tackling prejudice and discrimination through awareness raising, diversity training and educational programmes
- raising awareness about the importance of peaceful and respectful coexistence in a multi faith society
- advising local government, the police, hospitals and other public services on religious issues and the needs of users of different faiths
- assisting on local multi faith civic ceremonies and events
- responding to local incidents such as attacks on places of worship or cemeteries
- helping people to come to know each other better and increase their understanding of others’ faiths and beliefs
- learning about others’ faith traditions and helping one’s own be better understood
- running programmes which increase awareness about faiths, inter faith issues and religious identity
- engaging with civil society through offering advice and information to public bodies and others (and sometimes acting as nominating bodies for representation on particular consultative mechanisms such as LSPs)
- encouraging and supporting faith groups

to contribute to the social welfare of society through allowing them to share good practice in their work

- ensuring that key figures in each faith community come to know each other and develop relationships of mutual trust and support and encouraging friendships across traditions at all levels
- enabling members of different faiths to come together to work to improve local civic life and be part of a UK-wide movement toward inter religious co-operation with integrity on matters of common concern
- being used as policy sounding boards by outside bodies such as local government
- tackling tensions between faiths (in specific communities).

Through these routes, they contribute to a cohesive and harmonious local community and, more generally, contribute to the well being of society around them.

And on this note I will now pass back to Denise, who will take you through the first part of the complementary surveys carried out by IFN and NASACRE.

NASACRE survey of SACREs

Denise Chaplin: In preparation for today, both IFN and NASACRE sent out questionnaires to their local members.

NASACRE sent out 156 questionnaires to SACREs in England and we had 75 back, which we thought was a good response, particularly considering the infrequency of SACRE meetings and the fact that it was possible that the questionnaires arrived in local authorities after a SACRE meeting had recently taken place. Some responses were made by the clerks of the SACRE and some by the RE consultants who worked with the SACREs, and who, often had some links with the local inter

faith groups as well. Others were written by a member of the SACRE or a Chair. It was quite interesting to see that the way that people described their work was slightly different.

We categorised the examples of interaction, from loose to quite broad, into six 'levels' and we also tried to group them into types of contact.

At the most basic level, some SACREs knew that there was one or more local inter faith body in their area. At this point, I must say that those SACREs that are 'shire' county SACREs have got a lot of inter faith bodies that they might be working with. So some of those SACREs had a list of five or six inter faith bodies and their interaction with each of them could be different; whereas a small London borough might only have one local inter faith body and therefore the SACRE's knowledge of this might be through first-hand involvement or the partnership might be different, dynamically different.

At the next level, we noted that there were some SACREs who said that there was some kind of information exchange.

The next level beyond that was a much more active exchange between the bodies, which included invitations to each other's meetings and some shared activity planning. In some cases there was also support from the inter faith groups for recruiting to fill vacancies in SACRE membership. This was usually in cases where somebody was off sick or had taken an extended holiday. In some cases it was also for permanent recruitment purposes so they were there as a resource and they were working in that sort of way.

The next level was much more joint engagement in practical projects, which could be something like developing directories of faith groups or faith trails locally.

Beyond that was another level characterised by providing joint responses to events – sometimes on a regular basis – or developing work on themes like countering extremism,

local community cohesion work or Holocaust Memorial Day.

The most advanced level was some joint planning and organising of creative activities, for example, young inter faith projects, and possibly bidding for different initiatives together. So that was a much more cohesive communication.

When we looked at the factors that influenced the successful collaborations between the two groups, overlapping membership came out top. 17 SACREs said that the reason they worked well with their local inter faith bodies was due to shared membership. Collaboration was strongest where there was significant overlap where four or more people had membership of both the local inter faith bodies and the local SACRE, or attended both bodies at different levels. An overlap of one or two seemed to have little impact on the possibility of collaboration. The overlaps in some instances related to an officer of the SACRE being involved also in the local inter faith body. It could be the Chair, the Deputy Chair or the Adviser, which usually made the collaboration successful. That seemed to be quite an interesting dynamic. I do not think people had actively sought that arrangement. I think that is just how it is.

Why was this factor influential? On average there are four SACRE meetings in a school year, each of which lasts at least two hours so the minimum amount of time that the SACRE can meet is perhaps three meetings of two hours. Meetings have regular business items, which have to be received and discussed. Activities that SACREs have to carry out are set by their statutory duties and there is very little time for members in meetings also to do collective, creative, collaborative work. One SACRE reported, "We'd like to do something for Inter Faith Week but it would take about eighteen months of planning in SACRE meetings" because of the number of meetings they would have to have actually to get something creative together. Shared membership might mean, therefore, that SACRE members get more active between

SACRE meetings, doing something to move work forward. It might mean that there is greater understanding of each other's work that is organic. It might mean that you actually include each other more instinctively, in planning for the future including bidding for funding.

There are two final quotes that I want to leave you with from two different SACREs' responses. One said that through working with an inter faith body, it had been led to question whether the SACRE was actually sufficiently representative of the faiths in the local area. So working jointly had actually made them question that. And another SACRE reported an opposite experience. Its work with the local inter faith body had made it wonder whether that was sufficiently representative because it did not include humanists.

These are the key findings from the survey and today will be providing an opportunity for exploring these issues further.

IFN survey of local inter faith organisations

Stella Opoku-Owusu: I will now talk about local inter faith organisations' engagement with SACREs as evidenced by the survey that the Inter Faith Network carried out.

Local inter faith organisations and SACREs make, in distinctive but complementary ways, a key contribution to ensuring that people of all ages can develop understanding of the faiths in their areas and that there is positive interaction between people of different faiths and beliefs.

The aims of the survey we sent to local inter faith organisations were:

- for LIFOs to offer their reflections on their relationship with SACREs
- to share information which can help strengthen cooperative working between

them and SACREs – each with their own vital roles.

Scope of the survey

The IFN project surveyed local inter faith organisations' engagement with SACREs across England and Wales. It gathered information about their engagement with local SACREs with a particular focus on joint working, challenges and proposals for future working. Questions covered the perception of the relationship between LIFOs and SACREs, membership, areas of joint-working, challenges, good practice, respective roles and suggestions for better joint-working.

Responses to survey

Out of more than 200 organisations surveyed, we received responses from 52 LIFOs. Of this number, four organisations produced freeflow answers as they felt that the format of the questionnaire did not quite fit with their experience of engaging with SACREs or because while, organisationally, they had no engagement, they had individual members who worked with or had worked with their local SACREs.

Nature of responses

There were six different topics:

Topic 1: Respondents' perception of the relationship between LIFOs and SACREs

Respondents were asked how they perceived the nature of the relationship between their LIFO and their local SACRE in terms of their respective roles and their engagement with each other. 45 organisations responded to this question. Generally, most of them described the relationship as

- good
- developing
- complementary and
- mutually beneficial.

There were very few out of these 45 respondents who said they had very little interaction with their local SACREs if any.

Topic 2: LIFO members represented on local SACRE

LIFOs were asked if any of their members sat on their local SACRE. 41 said they had members represented on their SACRE, with most having between one and three faith community members on their local SACREs.

11 answered 'no' to this question or said they did not have any members represented on SACRE.

Topic 3: "Joint working"

In answer to the question on joint working, there were 49 responses. Despite the high number of responses, there appeared to be somewhat limited joint activity, with some respondents indicating that the particular project areas were being covered either singly, or jointly with other public sector bodies, or that they were aware of their local SACRE's involvement in this area of work, but were not necessarily working directly together.

There were also some instances of LIFOs developing projects to support agreed RE syllabi, but not necessarily with their local SACRE.

From the list of possibilities given for respondents to choose from, the two most frequently selected were:

- providing faith community members to visit schools to support RE or collective worship, noted in 14 responses
- developing or providing information about different faiths for eg a website or a local authority publication noted in 12 responses.

Topic 4: Challenges

On the issue of challenges, a range of issues were mentioned. A common thread in several responses was

- the problem of funding and resourcing joint activities
- limited capacity.

Another salient point raised by one organisation was that:

- ‘members of faith communities who sit on SACRE often do not see what they can offer as so many of the matters discussed are mainly of concern to RE teachers.’

When asked if they had any comments on their local inter faith organisation’s experiences of working jointly or achieving a satisfactory mode of communication and mutual awareness with the local SACREs, respondents highlighted some useful insights into the reasons for some successful collaborations. The findings here were similar to those to which Denise Chaplin referred in her presentation.

- One organisation described the result of successful collaboration as due to the ‘fact that some people are involved in both the SACRE and the inter faith group’.
- Another said that it was due to ‘the number of people who have membership of both organisations’ which enhances ‘communication and mutual awareness.’

Topic 5: Perception of how their local authority understands the respective roles of LIFOs and SACREs

On the question of how they perceived their local authority’s understanding of the respective roles of LIFOs and SACREs, there were 32 responses. Less than 8 seemed to think that their local authority understood well the respective roles of both the LIFO and the SACRE!

While some local authorities were seen as supportive, it would appear that more than three quarters of respondents thought that their while local authorities were working better with the SACRE, they (local authorities) were unaware of, or uninterested in, inter faith issues.

Topic 6 – Good practice and suggestions for better joint working

Quite a number of respondents did not

answer the question on good practice, and some of the 34 who did reply to this question did so in very general terms. About half this number said they had no examples to give. However, there were some specific suggestions, both in respect of joint working practices and also in initiatives which might be undertaken. For example:

- Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and their local SACRE had worked together to produce a DVD. This work has been used by HMI as an exemplar of good practice in schools. (Later today you may hear more about this as representatives of both organisations are here today.)
- a visit to a mosque was arranged by Mid Essex Inter Faith Group with SACRE. A powerpoint presentation was given on Islam to which SACRE members were invited.

The questionnaire was aimed at providing an initial picture of the engagement between LIFOs and SACREs. Therefore, while it provided a clear picture on LIFOs’ engagement with SACREs, it was not designed to give a deeper insight into the reasons behind successful collaborations. However, today’s seminar is intended to enable us to tease out some of these issues and provide good practices of engagement that can be emulated elsewhere.

Suggestions for better joint working

25 organisations responded. This was another question which was not answered by many respondents; but several of those who did reply did so in considerable detail, with some interesting suggestions.

- ‘A joint publication on places to visit and people to invite to schools. A publication called “Don’t tell us what upsets us!” countering many of the myths about what can and cannot be done in school because of assumed religious sensibilities.’ (Interfaith Milton Keynes).
- ‘There are two areas where co-working might be good:

- a) building the capacity of faith groups to host school visits and
 - b) building the capacity of faith groups to provide locally based 'educators' or 'guides' to their particular religion.'
- (Northampton Inter Faith Forum).

Conclusion

To conclude, based on the responses received to this survey, there seems to be a significant but varying level of interaction between LIFOs and SACREs. The examples of 'joint-work' seem to be few and far between.

Nevertheless, the examples of joint work are evidence of very significant and inspiring work and you will no doubt hear about examples of this in the course of today.

Of course, there are challenges and concerns to bear in mind but that goes without saying. Ultimately, it is important to know there is a genuine and passionate interest on the part of LIFOs to work with SACREs to enhance inter faith work with young people and in their communities.

Questions and discussion

Bill Moore: Thank you very much Stella and Denise. We now have an opportunity for discussion points and questions from the floor.

Guy Hordern, Birmingham SACRE: Thank you very much indeed for organising this day. Just a few points.

Denise said 'every local authority' has to have a SACRE. I think I am right in saying that smaller district councils do not. I think that it is also worth mentioning that it is local authorities that appoint members to the SACRE. Clearly they canvas nominations extensively from local faith groups. This is a really important area where one can involve local inter faith networks when seeking nominations. However, the authority itself, of course, has to know its own area well enough to know where the different faith groups are. Also I think that, technically, it is after five

years that syllabuses are *considered* for review not *required* to be reviewed. The last point I wanted to make is that I think that as far as the two faith committees are concerned it is actually religious groups that need to be covered. But a very warm welcome to your presentation. As far as Birmingham SACRE is concerned, one of its essential life bloods comes from faith communities. We do everything we can to strengthen it and have benefited from this presentation.

Denise Chaplin: My reference to the local authority issue was meant to be shorthand as I was giving a very brief presentation. As you know, the local authority method of approval of SACRE members varies from rubber stamping of names passed to them by the SACRE clerk to more active involvement in seeking members. The SACRE clerk has the role of approaching local faith communities (and national bodies if necessary if they cannot find their way into the local community). So there is a wide continuum of practice depending on who is servicing the SACRE. What happens in Birmingham might be very different from what happens in Lewisham, which might in turn be different from what happens in Walthamstow.

Actually, if you think about it, what is a local authority? It is a collection of people. There is usually somebody in the local authority who has to try and make sense of the local faith communities. But I think when the lead member for education, or whoever it is, receives a letter from a SACRE clerk, they often just hope that the SACRE and the local RE Adviser have already done the job of making sure that this is a suitable member.

Bertie Everard, Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group: I responded on behalf of the group to the consultation. I do not think there was a category where we could indicate our experience about the particular issue of how to make contact and develop a relationship with the SACRE. For the last three years or so, we have been hammering at the door of the county SACRE to dialogue and collaborate. For example, we produced a critique of our local

RE curriculum which we thought was inadequate in terms of inter faith matters. Looking ahead we would like to collaborate with SACRE to do something together in Inter Faith Week. So my question is, what recommendations can you give to try and get through the door if you are rebuffed by a SACRE?

Denise Chaplin: Do you not have any shared membership? Are none of your members on the SACRE? I would have thought that faith communities themselves would have members in both bodies so somebody somewhere should be able to talk to the individual members of the SACRE. I know nothing about the health of the particular SACRE that you are talking about but it could be experiencing some difficulties itself.

Bill Moore: Keep on trying to build. Very often, if you are finding the formal approaches are not working, looking for more informal ones, on an individual basis, around relationships can help. It can work both ways but essentially it is about building relationships of dialogue and that takes time.

Salma Piperdy, Gloucestershire SACRE: I am here from a 'shire' SACRE. This is a great start to the day with so much to digest. Seeing your presentation I actually feel quite proud of Gloucestershire SACRE and hope we are one of those that responded, because going through that slideshow, I think we ticked nearly every box there.

Although my SACRE consults the local inter faith group, the only thing we have not done – which is going to be my aim and my target possibly for Inter Faith Week – is work together on a joint project.

Back in January Gloucestershire SACRE carried out Discover Islam Week. The reason we had an event in January was because of the Christmas sales, as the foot flow of people during that time is much greater than at any other time. So the actual display took place in a very public area and attracted a very diverse clientele, as well as people from outside

Gloucestershire who had come there to shop. We are hoping in the Autumn term that, rather than confining it to one religion, Gloucestershire SACRE will hold an event which I think is called 'Sacred Faith'. This is meant to be a take on a similar event which took place in London where they looked at Christianity, Judaism and Islam and showed the links between the three. We are hoping to expand this event by covering most religions, bringing in old scripts and manuscripts and displaying them in our City mall. Although these activities are being carried out by Gloucestershire SACRE, we hope that in the future we will be able to work together on a joint project with the local inter faith group.

Bill Moore: That is really encouraging to hear and it is this kind of work we need to build on. If work like this is going on in your area, maybe we can use our national bodies to promote such local events.

Salma Piperdy: Can I add that I am the Muslim School Liaison Officer for the County Council so my job is actually to go into schools, to lead assemblies on Islam and provide INSET training for staff and to advise tutors on how they can bring religion into all aspects of the curriculum, not just RE. Rather than just looking at it from the Muslim perspective, I do try and bring in other religions and I certainly show the links between the three Abrahamic faiths.

Bill Moore: Thank you very much. We have got time for a couple more questions.

Mary Hale, Harrow SACRE and Harrow Interfaith Council: Harrow Interfaith Council is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. We have always worked very closely with the local SACRE. In fact, soon after the Interfaith Council was set up, they made representations to the local authority that Religious Education needed to be taken very much more seriously and, as a result of that, an advisory teacher for education was appointed. One of her duties was to liaise with the local inter faith body. So there has been always a very strong bond between the Interfaith Council and the SACRE

and that has proved to be very useful.

One of the important things that has happened recently is that our SACRE has received – and I am sure this is true of many SACREs – requests from schools for help with dealing with religious sensitivities, questions of diet and dress and so on. The SACRE has been able to call on its inter faith members to give advice on such matters to schools.

Bill Moore: Thank you very much. It is clear that there is a lot of good work going on and it is really good to hear about it. We have time for two more comments or questions.

John Hall, West Midlands Faith Forum: I am really impressed by what the research you have done has shown. I was amazed by the extent of joint working and I think that is very exciting and is to be commended. Your presentations also raised some really interesting questions that are challenging for us as well – questions about our respective roles and about joint working, questions about recruitment and what skills sets are required because there seems to be quite an interesting overlap between the inter faith groups and the SACREs. It also raises questions about governance and the required representation, which I think faith groups need to look at as much as SACREs.

So there is an interesting agenda there that we need to explore for the future and I think there is also a lot of opportunity for future working. In the West Midlands we have got an event called ‘Faith Ethos Education’, which is a kind of road show for us to explore the whole question of faith schools and I am sure there is an overlapping agenda for SACREs and inter faith groups to explore together and to have something useful to offer. There is a lot to build on but I am very excited by what has been done. Thank you.

Jane O’Hara, Bath Interfaith Group, Bath & North East Somerset Faith Forum and Bath and North East Somerset SACRE: I belong to both a local inter faith group and my local SACRE. Therefore, I wonder if the difference

between your response rates was because in some cases the two questionnaires – that is one for the local SACRE and the other for the local inter faith group – were addressed to the same person who then completed only one of the two, given that the surveys were complementary in nature? I ask because I completed one questionnaire only but I cannot remember if I completed it as a SACRE member or as an local inter faith group member. So that is just one consideration.

Bill Moore: That is interesting. We have been wondering how many people here are from a SACRE, how many from an inter faith organisation and how many from both. If we have time later on, we might well do a straw poll!

Denise Chaplin: We have noticed in the NASACRE Recruitment and Training Programme the difficulty SACREs sometimes have of actually getting into local communities to find new members. That has been quite noticeable in some parts of the country. I know that some national bodies, for example the Board of Deputies of British Jews, are getting responses or requests from SACREs all the time. They then have to come back in to the local inter faith bodies to find out who is available to join a SACRE, but they do not always get a good response from the local inter faith body. It can be helpful for SACREs when there is a local inter faith group with which they can work in partnership and which can help them find and support members.

Harriet Crabtree: One of the things we hear a lot about at the Inter Faith Network office is the problem of overload. The same faith community representatives are frequently asked to do everything: sit on the SACRE, be part of the local inter faith group, respond on behalf of their communities to particular consultations and so on. Due to the growth of interest in inter faith issues and the fact that a relatively small number of people are available to carry out related work, many people are experiencing serious overload. This is a particular problem for faith communities,

as for many organisations in the voluntary sector, because many of their members do the work as volunteers, fitting it in with their day jobs or other commitment. Sometimes faith groups cannot field their representatives on a regular and predictable basis because they are juggling day jobs as well. With no real funding to enable faith groups to field people for lots of meetings there can be real difficulties. And in SACRE contexts, for example, there can often be attendance from paid staff from some faith communities (for example the Churches) and unpaid faith community representatives from other communities and this can lead to a mismatch in terms of ability to contribute at a sustained level.

Denise Chaplin: I very much agree with Harriet on that.

There is also the issue of the capacity and commitment of the representative, regardless of what faith they represent.

Another tricky issue we at NASACRE hear about from SACREs is where occasionally people promote themselves and their faith but do not actually represent their faith community and yet sit on SACREs as members. The SACRE then has the difficulty and the challenge of trying to negotiate with such members. I think it is to the credit of many SACREs that, when that happens, they handle it with great courtesy and patience.

Harriet Crabtree: I was struck during the presentations and the comments by the fact that each of us are having to learn, or have needed to learn, the vocabulary of each other's working worlds. Could we do the quick straw poll and ask how many people are actually both in a local inter faith group and in a SACRE? *[Here nearly half the people in the room raised their hands]*. So about half the room probably is 'bi-lingual'.

Bill Moore: Thank you very much to everyone and particularly to Stella and to Denise.

Working together: two local stories

(1) Kirklees

David Raven-Hill and Fakhara Rehman

Bill Moore: We now have two examples of local stories where an inter faith organisation and a SACRE have been working together. We are going to start off with a presentation from Kirklees, by David Raven Hill and Fakhara Rehman.

David Raven-Hill, School Improvement Officer: RE and Community Cohesion, Kirklees Learning Service:

It is great to be here. As well as being School Improvement Officer with responsibility for RE and community cohesion in Kirklees in Yorkshire I am the lead officer on Kirklees SACRE.

Kirklees SACRE is responsible for developing a particular project called Inter Faith Kirklees (Schools) and my colleague, Fakhara Rehman, is the lead officer on our local inter faith organisation known as Kirklees Faiths Forum. We will begin with a brief overview of the two organisations, say something of our joint working and end up with what we consider our ten top tips for working together.

I was struck by the current edition of *RE Today* in which Julie Grove talks about sacred time and the fact that there is a need to 'concretise' it for children, as this notion can be quite difficult to understand. So we can go from ordinary time to sacred time as exemplified when *Shabbat* is observed, with the use of candles, on a Friday evening, thus starting off sacred time and stopping ordinary time. The *Havdallah*, or the separation ceremony with the *Havdallah* candle, signals not quite that it is the end of sacred time but the moving back into ordinary time.

The projects that we have developed through our organisations are not about stopping time but about slowing time right down so that we can actually concentrate on moving from the mundane, the ordinary world, to the mysterious or the mystery of the sacred space. Here is a short video that we put together to encapsulate this.

[Sound of music: Alternating between a cover version of Alison Moyet's 'Only you' and then worship music of various faiths.]

So how could we get to the brink of the numinous? How could we give our children and young people that experience which takes them beyond the mundane, to the mysterious? That was, in a sense, the reason for starting up Inter Faith Kirklees (Schools) an idea formulated as far back as 2001. So it has been a slow process: we wanted to encourage quality spiritual experiences from within places of worship to support 'learning outside the classroom'. We realised we could not do it on our own and had to work in partnership. At the time we worked in partnership with local inter faith organisations and with particular places of worship whose members and committees appreciated the philosophy behind our initiative. We consulted, fashioned a rationale and put together our arguments. Whilst many were very keen to develop quality learning experiences for pupils, not all found the notion of exploring faith quite so straightforward. To cut a long story short, we submitted an extensive bid and were eventually rewarded in 2005 when we received funding of £250,000 from the Home Office Positive Images grant scheme.

The funding was brilliant for us, but more important than this, was the positive ‘can do’ feeling in the SACRE whose members saw this as a really important project. We employed an Education Officer and have progressed to opening seven faith centres – two Christian, two Muslim and one of each of the other religions, except Judaism which, surprisingly, is represented in all the authorities peripheral to Kirklees, but not in Kirklees itself. We train people, whom we call hosts, from the local faith communities to guide this spiritual experience. We are actually teaching them how to engage children in metacognitive skills², philosophical questioning, thinking skills, those kind of critical and reflective skills which enable children to go from the mundane to the mysterious.

So, what happens when the pupils visit a Faith Centre? We slow the experience right down. When at the *Masjid* the children do not simply take off their shoes and walk into the prayer hall, we ask them, “Why do you think you might be taking your shoes off? Come up with three or four reasons. Work in pairs, talk to each other and share your ideas. What is your best reason? Why? How does this relate to the Muslim faith?” So we talk about the physical preparation and how they are going to prepare themselves mentally. Some of the answers they give are, “We’ll reflect. We’ll become calm.” And then we ask “How can you show that you’re calm?” By doing this we move very gradually from the mundane to the spiritual, to the mysterious. Before they actually enter, the host will say, “Are you now ready to go in?” So by the time these children enter, they are in a very reflective state and, like a sponge, are ready to absorb the experiences awaiting them.

These experiences are planned and written down in what we call Learning Packages. Our Education Officer works with the schools, with me and with the hosts, to write these interactive packages to support the hosts as they lead the interactive experiences.

Children are encouraged to reflect upon their

experiences during their break time. Besides eating during their break, it is an opportunity for dialogue as well.

What are the positives? The schools involved think it is brilliant – children and adults alike. Over the last year we have had over 200 visits to the Centres – each visit now linked in with the RE Local Agreed Syllabus. Interestingly, from a starting point back in 2001 of being wary of openly supporting a faith-related project, the local authority now base-funds the project.

There are also some negatives – which mainly relate to perceptions. In 2006 following a visit of children to the South Kirklees Muslim Faith Centre, the local press, *The Huddersfield Examiner*, printed the headline ‘There’s no Room for Terror Here!’ This was a pity, as the article itself was great – a really positive account of a school visit to our Faith Centre. So, I phoned up the deputy editor and challenged him. His response was that he said he was not aware that the headline read negatively: it is down to perceptions, like so many things. This sense of difference was reinforced just a few weeks ago when I read with interest the brochure produced by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom on how to deal with parental objections to their children visiting places of worship. These instances remind us that we must continue to champion that which encourages a respect for diversity. After all, it is only by interacting that we understand and it is only by understanding that we truly start to respect. The interaction and time for dialogue is the key.

So far so good, but we felt that we needed to do more and involve other adults, including parents in our initiative. One way was to involve our local inter faith network. So I will now hand over to Fakhara, to say a little bit about the kind of work that we have been involved in together.

Fakhara Rehman, Kirklees Faiths Forum, Community Faiths Coordinator: Good morning. *Assalamu alaikum*. Thank you very

² The ability to reflect and think about the “thinking” process itself.

much for inviting us. David has, in his presentation, already mentioned quite a few of the projects that we are working on jointly, such as the host training.

Kirklees Faiths Forum was established in 2007 before I joined it. It was set up to empower the faith communities in the Kirklees area to create better understanding and remove myths that shape peoples' prejudices. We aim to encourage faith communities to work together in matters of policy, strategy and action and to challenge all forms of discrimination. The Kirklees region is divided into North and South Kirklees. These two areas are quite distinct in terms of their faith communities and as a result the initiatives that are taking place within them are equally varied. I will talk a little more about some of the projects that are working towards creating an atmosphere of deeper respect and building better relationships and friendships by giving a voice to all faith communities in the region.

Denise talked about the importance of representation from all the various relevant groups. That's true for inter faith groups as well as SACREs. At Kirklees Faiths Forum, we have not only ensured that we have faith representatives on our Steering Group, we have also ensured that we have people from the council, from inter faith bodies, schools, the university, the police and so on. So we have a representation of local organisations as well as of faith communities which is vital if we want empowered, active and flourishing communities.

We have sought to boost the 'art of productive communication' as opposed to just enabling a 'talking shop'. Often the dialogue that needs to happen is difficult or challenging, but people must be given the opportunity to air their concerns, whatever they may be, and then supported to become actively engaged in affecting positive change. So an example of one of the projects that we have run recently is 'Friendship through Faith'. The project began by providing a neutral space for people to experience a 'culture share' regardless of

their faith background. The first session comprised individuals from a local Muslim women's group and those from a Christian Bible Studies group who came together to look at some areas of common concern. They enjoyed an extremely interactive evening of learning about each other and made some new friends! Subsequently, the group jointly decided to continue the friendships made in order to demonstrate visibly to the wider community how their common aspirations bound them in their humanity regardless of their personal faith.

It is very important to make the link between the schools and the wider community. The partnership between Interfaith Kirklees Schools and Kirklees Faiths Forum helps us be aware what the concerns of the teachers and children are, and it helps us engage parents. There are many parents particularly, who are cautious of the impact of other faiths on their children. The Faiths Forum is striving to change any negative perceptions and eventually change attitudes of mind and heart through education, dialogue and establishing positive partnerships with all concerned.

So yes, there are challenges, but, if we want to remove the barriers, then first of all we have to acknowledge those barriers. There is a lot of work to be done, but if we change our mind-set and replace the word 'challenge' with 'opportunity' then it becomes more achievable and hopefully leads us towards working more effectively with all faith communities. Somebody used the word 'belief' – that is our focus. We work with people of faith and no faith. People may describe themselves as having no faith but they may still have beliefs and values that are shared and want to contribute to positive change – whether it is through increasing their faith literacy, or just allowing people to express their identities. We can all be different and at the same time respect the differences of others and ensure that everyone feels accepted, respected and valued.

David Raven-Hill: What are our plans for the

future? We want to work together on getting the full support of parents rather than accepting the fact, for example, that we are going to get one or two parents in a class saying 'I am not having my child going to the mosque'. We want to act proactively and to invite parents to the venues before the visit by the children. So we are setting up a project with the Faiths Forum to do this.

Other specific projects we are developing include the 'Golcar Together' project. You might have heard of the tragic death of a taxi driver in Yorkshire. It was in Golcar in Kirklees and we are working with the faith communities in this Golcar area, near Huddersfield, on a project to celebrate the diversity and strength of Golcar and to remove prejudices and stereotypes that exist in the community.

We have got ten top tips for working together. Not surprisingly, our top tips would be 'take things slowly', 'make sure that you consult' and 'make sure that you really get to know

people', because you end up with far too many problems if you try to rush things. Working together takes time.

Finally, when I was last in East Sussex at the Chithurst Theravada Buddhist Monastery, I picked up a wonderful booklet called *Noticing Space* and this, in a sense, encapsulates what we are about. If we look around this room, we define the room by the objects in it. We do not really notice the space. When I speak, you hear my words – for example, 'From the mystery to the mundane'. But actually without the spaces, there aren't any words. And it is those spaces that the Kirklees Faiths Forum and Inter Faith Kirklees Schools are trying to develop.

Bill Moore: Thank you very much for sharing this excellent work with us.

10 Top Tips

- Determine why you need to work together – very clear aims
- Ensure there is representation on each other's Steering Committees
- Have a go at a simple joint project
- Root activity in agreed strategy
- Map out communication
- Ensure clear delineation of roles – delegation etc
- Identify strengths of each organisation and plan how each can support the other
- Plan joint training
- Consider joint approaches, where appropriate, to marketing
- Start small and be realistic: don't try to change the world

(2) Warwickshire

Manjit Kaur and Gareth Jones

Manjit Kaur, Chair of Warwickshire SACRE and Head, Queen's Church of England Junior School, Nuneaton: Good morning folks. It's good to be here today. Although I chair Warwickshire SACRE, I was born and bred in Coventry and learned about my own Sikh faith in Coventry – which is perhaps slightly unusual.

We are going to go back one step and talk about our SACRE, its structure and organisation, how it got involved in joint working with local inter faith groups and where we intend to go next.

But, first a word about my working context. I am the head of a Church of England school, which again is an unusual circumstance. My school is 50% Church of England and 50% other faiths – 45% Muslim, 2–3% Hindu, and 2% Buddhist. I am the only Sikh there. My deputy is a Humanist, my lower school leader is a strong practising Muslim and my upper school leader is a very strong practising Christian. It is actually quite an interesting environment to be in.

Warwickshire SACRE is a shire county SACRE. It has a strong commitment to joint working and joint ownership, ethnic minority interaction and faith groups. I am going to begin with the Warwickshire slogan. It was something that my predecessor as SACRE Chair defined and I have taken it on board because I actually believe in the vision. Our role as a SACRE is to 'bring communities of people together' and build bridges. We are doing this in all sorts of ways.

Gareth Jones, Inter Faith Development Officer, West Midlands Faith Forum: I am briefly going to set the scene for what Manjit will be talking about next.

We are minus PowerPoint due to some problem with compatibility of programmes. But I will conjure you up a word picture! What you should be seeing is a lovely slide of a Muslim lady from Stratford and a Hindu gentleman from Rugby. Now, if you were to hear the words 'inter faith' and 'West Midlands', you would probably not instantly think about Warwickshire. You would probably think of Birmingham or Coventry or the Black Country. And, to some extent, you would be right. But according to the 2001 Census 3.4% of people in Warwick District identified themselves as Sikh, 2% in Rugby identified themselves as Hindu, and in Nuneaton and Bedworth 1.6% of people identified themselves as Muslim and 1.5% as Sikh. So across Warwickshire you actually have a fairly significant presence of a number of different faiths.

Until a couple of years ago there were four different inter faith groups across Coventry and Warwickshire: Coventry Interfaith Group, Coventry Multi-Faith Forum, Rugby Inter Faith Forum and Warwick District Faiths Forum. Between the four of them they cover most of the types that Stella Opoku-Owusu described earlier on in her presentation, from the small intimate group of friends wanting to get to know each other and learn about each other's faiths to the more representative type of inter faith body that has representatives from all the different places of worship in a particular district, and also those of public and voluntary/community sector bodies.

Over the last two years, there have been two new inter faith groups set up in two very different parts of the county – one of them up in the north in Nuneaton and Bedworth (Nuneaton and Bedworth Inter-Faith Group), the other one right down in the south in

Stratford upon Avon (Stratford Inter-Faith Forum), where the only places of worship are actually Christian churches. These are quite significant groups. Both of them have now got steering groups, both of them are developing their constitutions and both of them are developing links, if they did not already exist, with the wider community.

The next picture you would have seen, had our PowerPoint been compatible with your windows package, would have been one of people participating in the Coventry peace walk.

What are some of the activities that these different inter faith groups engage in? A lot of these you would already identify with from your own localities. Some of them are:

- walks of faith and peace walks
- annual lectures – I think of Rugby and Warwick District in particular where the faith forums organise annual lectures
- festivals and exhibitions – this very weekend the Leamington Peace Festival takes place. I encourage you to stay around for the weekend and go to it – you will have a wonderful time. Mehru Fitter, who was one of the people to welcome us here this morning, has been the driving force behind some fantastic exhibitions put on by Coventry Multi-Faith Forum
- working in and forming partnerships of various kinds, including Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership, partnerships with police, the education and health sectors; and working with chaplains in higher and further education
- work on sacred space – for example a multi faith group was set up a year and a half ago to work with a hospice chaplain in designing a new sanctuary-cum-sacred space in a newly built hospice in Coventry
- ‘community days’ – Warwick District Faiths Forum set up a community day recently

for the National Police Improvement Agency and people came down from Harrogate to speak to members of the different local faith communities

- consultation – over the last few months, there have been two very significant local authority consultations with members of faith communities in Warwick District and Coventry.

For a year I worked as the Inter Faith Development Worker in the sub-region of Coventry and Warwickshire and the different inter faith groups are now developing a sub-regional perspective. I was able to organise two events – one in Coventry and one in Rugby – where more than sixty people from all the faith communities turned up from all across Coventry and Warwickshire, to talk first about the meaning of faith in the community and then, secondly, to explore the connection between faith and values. So, that is a little of the background and I will now hand over again to Manjit.

Manjit Kaur: I will now talk about the practicalities. Like every other SACRE, the Warwickshire one has three meetings a year. We have deliberately said the autumn meeting will always be in a school. The spring term meeting is always in a place of worship and the summer term meeting is usually in a local authority building. So we are deliberately and overtly saying, “These are our key stakeholders and we will ensure that just by the way we meet, we bring communities together.”

In the context of SACRE meetings held in schools, we normally begin with a buffet meal. I love RE meetings in Warwickshire – we are always fed! As a teacher, I really appreciate that, especially after a long day’s work! We usually ask for a presentation from the RE coordinator, which allows us to carry out our monitoring role. We then have a tour of the school. Schools have often asked the children to take us around so we have a chance to interact with pupils. In the last four years, we have held meetings at a primary school, a

secondary school and a special school. Each school has provided interesting presentations. The first one we heard was from pupils in the foundation stage – it was related to the Personal and Social Education (PSE) element of the curriculum. The RE element was evident through the cultural aspect. We actually had an opportunity to share good practice with the whole of the county because we asked for the presentation to be written up. Equally we have made friends with a school and have an opportunity to ask them to test out materials for us on behalf of Warwickshire SACRE.

In the context of the place of worship, we have got a six-year plan so we will meet in one of each of the sizeable traditions that are represented in this county. So far we have been to the local gurdwara in Leamington Spa, Coventry Cathedral the year before last and the year before that we were at the *masjid* in Nuneaton. This year we met at the *mandir* in Rugby and this was where we launched our agreed syllabus for the next five years.

There is lots of communication in the background between the SACRE clerk and external contacts, which in itself has built up a whole infrastructure of relationships. We know that sometimes the best piece of work reflects the strength of relationships and contacts. What we did not expect – but has happened – has been members of the faith communities showing their warm and welcoming natures by allowing us the opportunity to use their places of worship for meetings. This has encouraged relationships with other communities outside of their faith communities. This has been a very positive impact linked to the role of Warwick SACRE.

We find that by using places of worship for meetings we have built relationships with people who are not perceived by the county as 'leaders' within their community groups but who are, in fact, the force behind these: the ordinary congregations. For us, that has actually been the key point. We have found we have made friends with the people with whom we would not actually have had the

opportunity of associating. My geographical skills have improved no end. I am very geographically challenged but I now know where most of the places of worship are and how to get to them! Again, we eat together and SACRE provides the money for it so it is not a cost to any of our places of worship.

Stakeholders who have benefitted from our SACRE's link and work with places of worship include the governors group, headteachers group, cabinet, personal connections – National Trust, community groups, equal opportunities team, school performance team, administrative infrastructure.

We plan to work together by highlighting the latest OFSTED requirements, which explicitly state that community cohesion, should be understood in relation to religion and belief, among its strands. We have sponsored events around the county such as the year 8 youth SACRE. This is an opportunity for year 8s across the county to come together and consider a range of issues in a creative way whilst interacting.

Our SACRE agenda includes standing items to enable us to keep tabs on inter faith work around the county either through joint membership of these groups or links through our infrastructure. Our meetings are planned that there is recognition of faith festivals to ensure maximum participation of all faiths.

Where next and with whom? That is our question. This presentation has resulted in Gareth and I asking more questions and exploring other possibilities. We hope you have found our presentation informative and that there are ideas for you to be able to use. Feel free to share yours with us.

Feedback from working groups

Harriet Crabtree, Director, Inter Faith

Network: Welcome back to the afternoon session of today's joint conference of NASACRE and the Inter Faith Network on SACREs, local inter faith groups and joint working. Thank you to everybody who has contributed to the day so far. I will move straight on, if I may, to invite one person from each workshop, starting with Workshop A, to come up and give a brief encapsulation of one key point, or two if you think you can make it in the two-minute slot.

Workshop A: How can local inter faith bodies complement the work of SACREs in relation to the content of the local RE syllabus?

Marjorie Crombie, National Association of SACREs Based on the example in Birmingham where there have been beneficial collaborations between faith groups, – the Birmingham Council of Faiths, the Birmingham Faith Leaders Group and Birmingham SACRE – it was clear that, as SACREs and local inter faith groups, we can achieve a lot if there is substantial funding.

In Birmingham, they have been able to put into practice clear strategies over two years to achieve agreed ends between the above-mentioned groups. This included producing resources, producing a film ('Faith makes a difference') and employing a worker to take this work forward. Workshop participants seemed very surprised about how much could actually be agreed and achieved over two years, and felt inspired by it.

One of the points that came out from our discussion was that SACREs who have substantial funding should have the responsibility of making their resources,

knowledge and skills available in some way to SACREs that are not so fortunate.

Secondly, it was felt that perhaps too much attention is generally given to differences between faiths and that there should be greater emphasis on commonalities. The Birmingham syllabus (www.birmingham-asc.org.uk) emphasises pupils learning from religion – learning from 24 'spiritual and moral dispositions', ie personal qualities and attitudes – which were agreed collaboratively by the multi-faith authors.

Two or three people in the workshop felt that it was important to continue to emphasise what we have in common and to bring these commonalities to bear on our civil affairs and structures.

Workshop B: Local inter faith bodies and SACREs – working together with and in schools

Isobel Short, Durham SACRE: My name is Isobel Short and my colleague Ian Hunter Smith and I are here representing Durham SACRE today. We had an interesting discussion in Workshop B following a presentation from Jane O'Hara from the Bath and North East Somerset SACRE and the local inter faith group about how the inter faith group had been set up and some of the work that they are now trying to do to support schools through SACREs.

Our discussion focused on two key issues. One was funding – big surprise! The availability of funding for SACREs' work, particularly around inter faith issues, varies from place to place. This is true for local inter faith groups too, whether funded by local authorities or otherwise. We wondered if there was a

possibility for the Inter Faith Network for the UK and NASACRE to compile a list of funding opportunities on a regular basis and make this available to SACREs and inter faith organisations.

We also reflected on the issue of funding from schools. I think a lot of schools want to invite faith representatives but they often think that this should be undertaken completely free, even though the schools may have a budget for community cohesion and various other pots of money. That can be an issue if we want faith representatives to have their expenses covered. Some faith representatives may be employed and can do it during their work hours so it may not be a big issue for them but other people provide this service simply through the goodness of their heart.

Our second issue was around what we decided we would call 'high quality learning'. For example, sometimes schools take their pupils or students to sacred spaces or representatives from faith communities come into schools and it becomes evident that there has not been enough preparation and training between the schools and faith community representatives. So often that learning experience for the young ones can be very dry. As someone who carries out monitoring in schools, I know the big issue now is that dynamic learning is vital and that schools need to look at developing that in a variety of interactive ways. So proper training is needed. There is also the issue of working together as schools and faith communities to ensure that that quality of learning for children is stimulating and enjoyable.

Workshop C: How can local inter faith bodies and SACREs work to ensure that there is good information on religions and about inter faith issues available for use in their local area?

Jenny Kartupelis, East of England Faiths Council: The following were our key points. SACREs and local inter faith bodies need to find ways to work together to ensure the availability of good material about faiths in

their areas, making it available not only to schools but also to the wider community. This involves producing information and learning experiences for schools but also materials that are suitable for wider use. We thought it would be good if local inter faith bodies and SACREs could explore together what resources are available and what else might be helpful.

We also felt that there is some very good material around and it would be nice to have either a national library or a list of these resources. We saw some excellent examples from Suffolk Inter Faith Resource of this sort of material. If any others of you would like to share that, my colleague from the East of England Region, Cynthia Capey of Suffolk Inter Faith Resource is here and has those materials. Thank you very much.

Workshop D: How can SACREs and local inter faith bodies work well together, beyond the classroom, to engage young people in their areas in inter faith projects and learning?

Michael Metcalf, National Association of SACREs: We began with a very good presentation from Faiths United (Tameside) about the way in which their SACRE works with them to present a varied programme of conferences and other events that involve young people. Some of the events are sponsored by the SACRE with the support of Faiths United and vice versa. It was interesting to hear a variety of responses and to learn of the effectiveness of such joint working.

We focused on how to set up and sustain youth forums and councils. Some people were wondering how to begin these. We thought that part of this was raising awareness of the value of inter faith dialogue but that ultimately, young people themselves must generate the interest and the vision for organising and sustaining a youth forum or inter faith group. This could be generated spontaneously from among them, or it could be drawn out from them by a gifted young leader or an adult person. Either way, at some point or other, it would be desirable that

young people themselves should own, and be able to identify with, their forum or group.

There was also a question about developing inter generational cohesion. There was a feeling that members of local inter faith groups tend to be from the older generations and this creates its own challenges in terms of tapping into or making links with young people.

Our second point was on the need for a sense of passion or commitment and development within inter faith work. Usually, this depends on there being key inspirational individuals who are strongly motivated, and act as movers and shakers, bringing deep personal commitment into their situation. But it will also need favourable local circumstances. These might be through the availability of resourcing or funding or support from the local authority. Often, it will also need a dedicated officer or worker who is able to develop and support the youth forum in question and also perhaps the inter faith forum at the adult level.

Workshop E: An Inter Faith Week is planned for autumn 2009. This could provide a useful opportunity for SACREs and local inter faith bodies to highlight aspects of their work-singly and together. What preliminary ideas do participants have on this?

Amy Willshire, Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum: There was a wide range of ideas and activities in this workshop. Some people knew a lot about Inter Faith Week and had already planned in detail the exact activities or the range of activities they wanted to cover. And there were those who were only just hearing of Inter Faith Week for the first time and were thinking about how they could respond.

There are three points that I would like to share very quickly. The first was what we described as 'looking beyond the samosa'. What we meant by this expression was the need to ensure that activities arranged for the

Week should not be tokenistic but should go deeper into the heart of inter faith work. So we would like everyone to adopt the phrase 'looking beyond the samosa'.

Secondly, participants thought that Inter Faith Week would be a really good opportunity for people to learn about their own faith as well as other people's. In particular it may be an opportunity to get people who are on the margins of their faith, to know where their faith communities are and what people of their faith believe in.

The third point was about attracting people who do not normally engage. We talked about partnering with other agencies, besides SACRE and inter faith groups, such as the youth service, the police, the voluntary sector and others to try and make this a really high profile week. We also thought it would be useful to identify the age groups and demographics of people who do not normally engage with inter faith activity and explore how they can be encouraged to engage to make this Week really representational and a whole community event.

Workshop F: What guidance might helpfully be developed for local authorities and other public agencies on the respective roles of SACREs and local inter faith bodies – as education resources; consultative sounding boards; partners for community cohesion – and the importance of supporting and working well with both?

Brian Pearce, Adviser Faith and Public Life, Inter Faith Network: We had an excellent joint presentation from the London Borough of Hillingdon and the Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and a very wide ranging discussion.

The first point is about guidance. We saw the need for guidance for local authorities. We noted the opportunity which might be presented by the revision that is going on of the guidance in the 2002 LGA publication *Faith and Community*. There is perhaps a need for more detailed guidance for SACREs, and perhaps joint working between NASACRE

and DCSF on that. We noted the guidance requirements of other public bodies, for example primary care trusts, and the fact that there is often an overlap between different areas, for example, between faith concerns, health and education. We also noted a need for guidance for local inter faith groups. When *The Local Inter Faith Guide* of the Inter Faith Network, for example, is revised, it would be helpful to include more on how to handle issues of representation and “representativity”. We noted the need for complementarity in terms of the guidance produced at national, regional and local level. National guidance can be helpful in not always having to reinvent the wheel, but material produced and owned locally can be very valuable too. And the guidance needs to be practical.

Secondly, to supplement guidance material, we wanted to emphasise the importance of communication – not just letting guidance gather dust on the shelves. We all have to be proactive in our different ways. We need to develop our networks in terms of communication and engagement widely within our areas with the people with whom we are concerned.

Last of all – and in the context of communication – there is the need to demonstrate commitment to what we are doing.

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you to all the reporters. I am going to suggest that before we move into the panel session we have five minutes for those of you who would like to offer comments at this stage or reflections following the working groups, to do so. I think we have had excellent encapsulations but if there is anything that you have been burning to say before we move into the panel discussions this is your chance.

Carlo Schröder, Inter Faith Development Officer, Northwest Forum of Faiths: I do not know whether Helen made this point in her group, but in terms of capacity building for members of local faith communities going

into schools, there was an interesting model that we developed in Lancashire in partnership with its SACRE. This was where the local SACRE had the role of training individuals from different faith communities. They were trained by the SACRE to go into schools and speak about faith from a personal point of view rather than from the point of view of making all inclusive statements and general statements about their faith. So it was more of a personal expression. There was a need to ensure that when they went into schools they actually knew how to deal with the pupils there. There was a good take up from schools who wanted this service, and so we started to charge for the service and this is still ongoing.

Shan Barclay, Norfolk SACRE and Norwich InterFaith Link, and Norwich and Norfolk Muslim Association I am here from Norfolk SACRE and also Norwich InterFaith Link. I would like to pick up on the use of resources and pooling resources. One obvious way of doing this is by using the internet. If anybody is interested in seeing work in Norfolk related to inter faith, or to Islam in particular visit www.norwichmuslims.org. On 4 July we are having a combined peace camp and peace cycle, which is an annual event, and is very much inter faith in concept. It brings together about twenty-five organisations as well as people from the local Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities.

Salma Piperdy: There is a website called www.irespect.net and on there you will find resources that you can use within your classroom, and lesson plans and activities that you can do. In particular, there is an English translation of the Quran available, for use especially for Key Stages 1 and 2. This can be placed on the book shelves and children can use it and handle it. It is helpful to get them used to handling artefacts more generally.

Secondly, we have an annual conference. This year it was due to be in February but due to the snow we had to postpone it so it is going to be on 15 June and it is in the style of ‘speed dating’. Teachers, governors and so on are all

attending and we will also have members from different faiths attending. There will be short sessions where teachers will have the chance to ask questions of members of faith communities. They will ask the sort of questions that children are likely to come up with.

Panel

Harriet Crabtree: Through the morning presentations and working groups we have been looking at a range of issues related to how local inter faith bodies and SACREs can work well together and how they can, jointly, make a contribution to inter faith understanding in their areas, in their schools and in their wider communities and how they can help improve community cohesion. We now have a chance to hear some reflections from a number of people who will develop some of the issues further or shed a different light on them: Tania ap Siôn, Sophie Faber, Warwick Hawkins, Ian Hunter Smart and Zahid Jawed.

Our first speaker is Tania ap Siôn. Tania is the Secretary of the Wales Association of SACREs, which is the equivalent to the National Association of SACREs in England. There is a somewhat different system in Wales, as she will explain, and so it is particularly good to have her perspective.

Tania ap Siôn, Secretary, Wales Association of SACREs: I would like to begin by saying how wonderful it is to be here and for Wales to be included in this very important meeting today. I found the day particularly informative and useful and I am going to take a lot back with me to Wales to share with my colleagues.

Let me start by saying something from a Welsh perspective and from the Wales Association of SACREs perspective. Community cohesion is just as big an issue in Wales as it is in England and it is high on the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda. It is only fairly recently, though, that the Wales Association of SACREs has been explicitly engaging with the community cohesion issue. WASACRE has a meeting with the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills once a year and we choose the agenda items for that meeting. Last November, for the first time, we

raised the issue of community cohesion and how Religious Education can contribute to that. That question led to a further meeting with the Minister for Social Justice in Wales. A number of developments have come from that meeting which will forge even stronger links between the Wales Association of SACREs and the Welsh Assembly Government. So, for the first time in Wales, as far as I know, you are seeing a Wales Association of SACREs which is looking at social issues beyond RE, not limited to RE and collective worship. We are beginning to be interested in, and have an impact on, other wider matters such as the important matter of community cohesion.

Listening to what has been said today, two main questions occur to me. The first one is in relation to Wales where I would like to know exactly what is going on at a local level. You mentioned that some surveys had been carried out in England and also in Wales. I was interested in this because as far as I am aware, we have not had any survey of Welsh SACREs and I would really like to see material of this kind. I do not know what my colleagues at the Wales Association of SACREs would think about that but I think it is important to know where we are now before we can say, "What can we do and where can we go from here?" So that is probably my main point. I would be interested in seeing survey results and also getting some feedback from the local inter faith bodies, which you actually did survey in Wales. It would be good to see that and to develop on it.

Depending on my colleagues and their enthusiasm for this, the other point I would like to make is that I think that Wales is a really interesting test area, potentially, because it is so small comparatively in terms of population and its structure is probably as it would be in England. We have 22 LEAs and 22 SACREs, all of which have bought in

strongly to the Wales Association of SACREs so that gives us a very strong position in Wales. We have already worked with local SACREs jointly and very productively in helping to consult on and produce the new RE exemplar framework for Wales. We have been working closely with the Welsh Assembly Government on that as well. We have also been promoting post-16 RE again across Wales, using the local SACREs, so this makes me think that if this sort of agenda was taken on board a lot could be achieved.

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you, Tania. Next we hear from Sophie Faber from the Cohesion Unit of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Sophie Faber, Cohesion Unit, Department for Children, Schools and Families: Our Unit supports schools on their duty to promote community cohesion. I would like to reflect on how work with SACREs and local inter faith organisations can contribute towards this.

As many of you will know, schools have had a duty to promote community cohesion since September 2007 and have been inspected on it since September 2008. Ofsted has brought in a new framework recently, which has a section on community cohesion – what inspectors will be looking for on community cohesion. It explicitly says that community cohesion should be seen in relation to religions and beliefs, ethnicities and cultures, and socio and economic class. So you can see the three main areas at which Ofsted will be looking. One of them is ‘religion and belief’. It is clear that Religious Education can play a key role in supporting a school to achieve its duty to promote community cohesion by helping pupils to understand others and value the diversity in their school and in Britain.

The first year of Ofsted inspections point to a need for more to be done to support schools through SACREs and local inter faith networks. The awareness of the duty and the skills of teachers to be able to do something about the community cohesion duty are not in all cases as high as they should be. Also local

authorities are not all supporting schools to the extent that they should be on community cohesion. It seems to me therefore that the example we have had today from Kirklees, reflects exactly the kind of approach which SACREs and local inter faith organisations could be taking to support schools. You could, together, encourage schools to use you more by highlighting the fact that they have to promote community cohesion.

In terms of Inter Faith Week, as Harriet said, my Department is providing some funding to NATRE, the National Association of Teachers of RE and to NASACRE, to develop some materials to support schools for Inter Faith Week. I would encourage SACREs, schools and local faith communities all to work together on inter faith activities that exemplify the spirit and creativity of some of the joint work about which we have heard today.

Harriet Crabtree: It is particularly welcome that both the Department of Children, Families and Schools and the Department of Communities and Local Government are increasingly seeing the significance of inter faith relations within the community cohesion agenda.

We now move on to Warwick Hawkins. Warwick is the Head of Faith Communities Engagement at the Department for Communities and Local Government. He has a long history in this area of work. Some of you may remember him from the time when he worked on the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment and other faith related Millennium events or from when he was involved with the Golden Jubilee Youth Faith Forum.

Warwick Hawkins, Head of Faith Community Engagement, Department for Communities and Local Government: Thank you, Harriet. I think the official Millennium events may have been the first time that the Government took a structured interest in consulting with all the faith communities on major national events. Then three years ago there was the Commission on Integration and

Cohesion, which was an independent Commission which reported to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. It underlined the importance of inter faith activity in community cohesion. Our Department agreed and produced, in 2008, the document *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society*. This is the Government's strategy for inter faith engagement. We made a number of policy commitments following from this. Among those was that to cooperate with the Inter Faith Network on a national Inter Faith Week in England⁴. I have been especially delighted over the course of the day by the number of you that have actually heard of Inter Faith Week and indeed in many cases are taking forward ideas for it.

Another action that came out of this document was a grants programme called 'Faiths in Action'. It is heartening that there were over five hundred applications from inter faith organisations all over the country for grants of up to £12,000 to assist on local inter faith work. We have been able to offer funding to over 200 of those. The funding round is opening again later this year and I would encourage local inter faith organisations to put in applications. This will be for funding up to £6,000. We hope this way there will be even more local inter faith activities happening all over the country.

There is one observation I would like to make about the Faiths in Action scheme. It is interesting to see that of those applications that were successful a number of them involve young people. It was always uppermost in our minds and in the minds of our Ministers that these schemes should bring in young people. Even more interestingly, the ones that are successful are not just ones that say "Well, let's get lots of young Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims all together in a big space and they can have an interesting conversation about inter faith". That kind of proposal rarely works. The successful youth focused applications within the Faiths in Action scheme are those that bring young people

together to create something that is at the heart of their own interests, such as making music together or organising football activities.

My other observation is that before young people get involved in inter faith activity they need to have a better understanding of their own faith that goes beyond saying 'I'm a Hindu' or 'I'm an Anglican Christian' or whatever it might be. It seems to me that that is where SACREs and, of course, RE have a very important role to play.

Harriet Crabtree: The next presenter is Ian Hunter Smart and he has been invited to offer a reflection because he is one of that small number of people who are based in a local authority but who are working both on developing inter faith activity and with the SACRE.

Ian Hunter Smart, Community

Development Officer, Durham County

Council: Thank you very much. I will say a little bit about my own working context, to add to what Harriet has just said. I am a Community Development Officer in one of the new unitary authorities of Durham County Council. Broadly, my role amongst my team colleagues is about helping the council to be better at listening and responding to local people – a lifetime's activity, I think. I have a particular role and remit which is leading engagement with faith communities.

I suspect that the demographics of County Durham are rather different to those of counties and boroughs represented by most people in this room. According to the last census, County Durham is predominantly 'white British'. 83.5% of its population identified themselves as Christian in the last census, and 0.5% as people from other world faith communities. In terms of places of worship, there are numerous churches of different Christian denominations and there is a prayer room in the University of Durham for Muslim students. Apart from that there are no other places of worship of other faith

4 Proposed by IFN to Government during the consultation which led to *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society*.

communities in County Durham. So if you are a practising Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Jew, for example, you have to go outside of County Durham to your place of worship. So the social networks of these other faiths are likely to be outside of County Durham.

In terms of community cohesion, the issues for us are around small – but active – pockets of far right activity.

The experience of young people in schools is that they simply do not come across people of different ethnic backgrounds – let alone different faith backgrounds.

We have an emerging and developing County Durham Faiths Network, which has the involvement of ten different faith communities – about five different Christian denominations and five from other world religious communities. Four of the members are also members of the developing regional Faiths Network (the North East Regional Faiths Network, NERFN) and three of them are currently on the Durham SACRE. So that is quite encouraging really. I provide the secretariat for the County Durham Faiths Network because I believe very strongly in the importance of this. I am also privileged to sit on the Durham SACRE. I am not quite sure under which heading I come but I am very grateful to be there. It enables me to provide a link between the two and I think I have a good working relationship with our Inspector for RE and citizenship, Isobel Short, from whom you heard earlier.

We have begun to meet together regularly and to plan some joint working between the SACRE and the inter faith group. Our train journey back and forth to Durham is enabling us to do some planning for Inter Faith Week in a bit more detail. We have also been thinking about providing some information about the requirements of RE and collective worship, particularly for international students bringing their families and coming into our schools and not knowing what to expect. That came out of a specific request from the Faiths Network. We are also looking at developing

links with the Islamic Society, who have already taken the initiative to host a couple of visits from local schools to their prayer rooms in Durham.

As a local authority we are also engaged regionally in an action research project called Engaging with Faith which is looking at how local authorities go about doing that. Out of this research, we are developing a network of local authority officers who have a remit (even if a vague one) for engagement with faith issues. Usually we find it is the Equality and Diversity Officer that gets landed with this, so we are beginning to think about how we respond to the suggestions in the *Face to Face and Side by Side* document, including those on developing religious literacy for local authorities. We are also beginning to think, with the Regional Faiths Network and the Churches' Regional Commission, about developing civic literacy for faith communities. I am as yet undecided as to which is the greater challenge.

My reflections, if I have not gone over my time already, on today: I too have found it very interesting and informative but I am afraid I have indigestion. We have received a lot of information and I need to create some space for myself, perhaps some of that "sacred space" that David Raven-Hill talked to us about, in order to reflect on and to digest what we have heard today. I would have liked more time to unpack some of the highlights from the survey, which were really one of the main reasons for bringing us together today. I was struck though, and encouraged by, the obvious parallel and complementary roles that both SACREs and inter faith organisations have. I was disappointed but not surprised by the evident amount of lack of understanding amongst local authorities of the work and role of SACREs and the work and role of local inter faith organisations. So there is a lot more work that needs to be done there.

I was encouraged in the workshop that I attended by the clearly supportive and challenging role that both SACREs and inter faith organisations can have with local

authorities. I think that if local authorities want to engage, and are serious in engaging, with faith communities they also need to be prepared to be challenged by them. SACREs and inter faith organisations can act as that critical friend and ask awkward questions. Also out of the workshop came that important point about establishing good lines of communication and reporting structures – and I need to go back and think about how I can inform the leader of the county council and the elected members about the work and role of SACRE and the local inter faith organisation. Also, I need to think about how I can inform the chief executive and the senior officers of the council so they do not just put it over into Equality and Diversity or Community Development but they actually take this seriously.

Finally, I was asked for a suggestion of helpful next steps. I am not sure that I have got one in particular apart from the fact that I need time to digest all that we have heard today. Hopefully from the report on today we will be enabled to do that and to continue to gather together examples of good practice that we have heard today and have begun to share today, and to work towards some of those guidelines and guidance. But I would say “Do not be too hasty in putting together and producing yet another glossy report that will sit on the shelf!”

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you very much Ian.

We have built in a half-hour plenary discussion this afternoon and very much take the point about the need to have space and discussion and hope that there will be a chance to do that. Before that, we have some reflections from Zahid Jawed who has been invited today to add his thoughts. He is involved in his local SACRE and also has a very strong connection with his local inter faith group.

Zahid Jawed, Buckinghamshire SACRE and Wycombe Sharing of Faiths: I am on my local SACRE and also involved in the Wycombe Sharing of Faiths (WSOF). WSOF has been very

active in High Wycombe – especially in the last couple of years. As you may know, in 2006 there was a large anti terrorism police operation in the area. The police stayed for about six months, searching all the woods. We had many problems in High Wycombe because of this which was very visible and sent a strong message to the whole community with the implication that Muslims would be viewed with suspicion. It was left to community groups to repair the damage, to get out there and work in the community.

For that reason, Wycombe Sharing of Faiths was really useful. It was very good that we had an organisation where all the different faiths were already together. This became even more important in that time. This was also true of our SACRE.

WSOF and SACRE do work together and within the community. We both work in education and sometimes our members overlap and we attend each other’s meetings. Recently, we met one of the senior police officers who had just come to the area. He said that when he first came he had had lots of preconceptions about High Wycombe because of the news over the last few years. But he said that as he walked through the town he was very surprised at the nice feeling and how people got on with each other. It was not at all like he had expected. Maybe that comes from some of the work that people have been doing in the community – such as peace walks. In recent years the mosques have opened their doors and have learnt to be more open to the community. Wycombe Sharing of Faiths has also been very important in that respect. Many good developments of that kind have happened and if time permitted I would share them with you. But I hope that this has given you an idea of why and how the local inter faith group and SACRE are so important – separately and together – in our area.

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you for adding this important perspective. You have reflected in a powerful way on how SACREs and local inter faith groups can respond to the needs in their local areas. Local inter faith groups and

forums can be set up to do all sorts of things but they come alive when the local situation requires it and this is the virtue of building careful long term programmes of work. And while SACREs have particular duties in relation to the development of syllabuses they often do more, as we have heard today.

Now we have built in half an hour for discussion – a very important part of the day. I do not want to constrain this by putting down a set of specific questions but it would be good to hear whether you have any reflections on the survey on which Stella Opoku-Owusu and Denise Chaplin reported briefly earlier today. Were there findings that surprised you or any matters that concerned you? Are there practical steps that, having looked at the survey data this morning, been in your workshops and listened to the plenary presentations and reflections, you would like to recommend as ways of moving forward?

Shan Barclay: What concerned me – and I think would concern anyone – is the seeming lack of communication with local authorities. I remember that at a meeting of the East of England Faiths Council some years back we heard that ‘link’ officers with a responsibility for engaging with faith communities can be appointed in local authorities. I wonder if that might be a means to having better dialogue within and with the council as there would then be someone who could advise the council on faith and inter faith issues and work both ways, as it were, with the inter faith link and the SACREs within the local authority structure. They would be well placed to do this because they would be a county or city officer and might have more of the knowledge of the inner workings of the local authority than either the inter faith group or the SACRE. I know this step has not been adopted everywhere, but I believe it works quite well in cities where it has been adopted. I wonder if this was what Ian Hunter Smart was describing.

Ian Hunter Smart: The idea that each local authority should have such an officer is one of the specific recommendations in the

Government’s document *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi-Faith Society*. There are one or two around but I think my role is fairly unique. The problem is that this work with faith communities is often tagged onto a whole load of other responsibilities but if it is to be taken seriously it actually needs time and commitment to build the relationships and really make it work. The suggestion of such ‘link’ officers is an excellent one but the reality is that local authorities’ resources are stretched and relevant staff have many competing claims on their time. So the more the faith communities and Government push this and press this, I think, the better.

Syd Bill, Burton upon Trent Inter Faith

Network: This has been an interesting day so far and there is a lot to go away and think about. But one message I have to bring is that almost everybody in here already knows about SACREs. The people I am in contact with, including people in churches, do not know what a SACRE is. So when you are talking about communication, there is a great need to communicate with people more generally on that specific point!

My other concern – which I am sure not only applies to Staffordshire – is about language and the capacity for engagement. For example, in Burton Upon Trent, when we did get an imam to join the SACRE he found he had to read a lot of material in English, which was not his first language, and he had to travel to Stafford for meetings. We need to make it easier for people to contribute to the work of SACREs. For example, we could occasionally meet in Burton upon Trent instead of Stafford. The teachers’ centre there would make a good venue.

Bill Moore: I think that was a very important and well expressed point. Raising the profile of SACREs is one of the main challenges that we have. SACREs are only going to be effective if they are strongly supported by the local community. But first SACREs need funding and good support from the local authority in order to be able to promote themselves and

get that wider community support. The relationship between the local authority and the SACRE is critical. If we can raise the profile of inter faith groups, and SACREs, I think that this work will become more effective and people will have to take it seriously and local authorities will have to take on their responsibilities through these groups. We can work together on that.

Rather like governors of schools, members of a SACRE are volunteers, and that is an issue which people need to consider when exploring the work of SACREs and of inter faith groups as well. All of this is dependent on people who are giving up their own free time. That commitment is a real strength – the commitment of people who feel strongly about the cause and are not seeing it as some kind of business transaction. But we need to bear in mind the demands that this voluntary engagement places on busy people.

On your point about the location of meetings, NASACRE would encourage SACREs to meet in different places because people will have to travel and it is unreasonable to expect somebody to travel to the same place all the time. This way you ensure that members sometimes have a short journey, sometimes a long one.

Cynthia Capey, Suffolk Inter Faith Resource and Suffolk SACRE: I have attended meetings of two different SACREs and I was struck by the difference between the feel of the two. In one of them Christians seemed to dominate – even if the mode was that of being hospitable to other faiths. The people that were there representing other faiths seemed to feel quite marginalised so it did not feel like a partnership. In the other SACRE, there was much more of a feeling of ownership across the different faiths. I wonder what other people's experiences have been.

Carlo Schröder: One of my reflections is about communication. Communication between SACREs and inter faith groups is vital because there is a lot of overlap in some of the agendas that are being addressed. It is

also really important for local authorities to know who they are dealing with and how the respective bodies can work with them on faith issues. Thus there needs to be good communication by SACREs and inter faith organisations with local authorities.

In my work I have many times come across a situation where a local authority does not know about the relationship between the SACRE and the local inter faith group and is therefore oblivious to where the overlaps in their agendas lie. I have also found local authorities unaware of existing initiatives and how they fit together with other initiatives. In such circumstances they will sometimes look towards the SACRE with a view to establishing an inter faith group or approach the inter faith group to address issues about religious education. It is therefore important to raise awareness among local authorities by communicating clearly what work SACREs and inter faith groups do. As the Inter Faith Development Officer for the Northwest Faiths Forum, I recognize that I need to raise awareness about the work of SACREs and local inter faith groups in my dealings with local authorities throughout the region. I would encourage other colleagues in the field to do the same, if they are not already doing so.

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you. I am just going to ask whether any of the panel would particularly like to respond to those points.

Zahid Jawed: I would like to make a comment in relation to the point made by Cynthia Capey about the two SACRE meetings she attended. I have noticed when I have worked with some representatives of local inter faith groups that some of them are not comfortable once they are at the SACRE meetings. I think sitting on a SACRE is just like any other job. You have to have the right people there. You need people who are good at communicating, people who enjoy networking, people who want to be with other people. So I think if someone has a negative experience and does not wish to attend any more SACRE meetings, then you have to respect that as well. It is voluntary and

it is their choice.

I had a full-time teaching job in the past. Recently I moved into the schools improvement service but it is hard to devote very much time to SACRE. Generally, you find yourself rushing out of your work to get to a SACRE meeting and then going back to your job again. Finding and making the time to attend SACRE meetings is very difficult so I think that is one of the reasons that perhaps the profile of SACREs is not higher, although we hold meetings in different schools and different venues which helps.

Dilwyn Hunt, Dudley SACRE: When we talk about being a ‘representative of a religion’ on SACRE we have to be careful about what this really means. What a member of SACRE primarily brings to their SACRE is their humanity rather than a representation of a particular faith. This is something we should state more clearly and frequently. Every SACRE member’s interest should focus on the needs of the child and on the quality of education they receive rather than on singing the tune of a particular faith.

Bill Moore: I think that all of this is actually about the role of SACRE in promoting good learning and good experiences within schools and involving the community in this. One does not necessarily bring one’s values simply as a representative of a faith community – and indeed there is a question of how representative any one individual can be. Very important is the notion of humanity, of our values as humans, of bringing in a shared exploration of core concepts and experiences of what it means to be a person.

Creating an inclusive SACRE – a SACRE where one has the feeling that the views of all the people there are valued – is tremendously important. Part of this is using cooption well and ensuring a welcoming ethos of a SACRE. You need to work really hard on that: getting the right people in; finding opportunities to get perhaps people who are not so prepared to listen, to move on. It is a long-term process.

Rosemary Stokes, Leicester City SACRE We have had a lot of really inspiring information today about how groups have worked together. I just wanted to ask the panel if there are any challenging stories (even ‘disaster’ stories) that we can learn from.

Isobel Short: It has been super that you have put this event on and thank you for doing so. My question is about something that I observed earlier on in our discussions. It is about a real understanding that is needed about the added value of the role of faith community representatives to school life and RE.

I heard someone in conversation earlier on today comment that because most RE teachers are not religious or from a particular faith community, they often do not really understand a faith perspective. I would like to say I do not think that is the case. I think most RE teachers that I come across are superb champions for their subject. What they are really trying to do is to engage all children in understanding all faiths – whether they are from a faith perspective or not. So I want to emphasise Dilwyn’s comments earlier about the importance of bringing humanity to the table, about the interests of the child. I believe RE teachers are trying to work with that concept in mind of respect for all. Therefore there needs to be a clear understanding of the role of RE teachers. I wonder if anybody wants to respond to that?

And could I just add that It would be helpful for Muslims and Jews alike if national events such as this one were not scheduled for Fridays. For example, Jewish colleagues are unlikely to be able to get home in time for Shabbat which will begin this evening, especially if they are travelling up to Durham or the North.

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you to all those who have spoken so far for your very helpful points. We will take a few remaining questions and comments.

Steve Wilson, Newham SACRE This is in response to the point that was raised about

the perceived Christian bias which may put off a lot of people of some faiths.

The situation that we have in Newham is very contradictory. On the one hand, we have the inbuilt Church of England panel – which you do not have in Wales, of course, because there is no equivalent and there are only three panels there. But it so happens that in Newham the head of the local authority section is a vicar and is also the Chair of the SACRE. Yet we have so many faiths in Newham that the ‘other faiths’ panel actually physically outnumber all the other three put together. When you add in the fact that we have Muslim and Sikh teachers, the ‘other faiths’ are by far the biggest group.

However, there is still an inbuilt historical hangover. There was a time when a lot of Pagans, for example, would not get involved in inter faith activity because they felt that most of the inter faith groups in the early days, back in the 1970s, were just ‘Christians trying to understand the rest’. I think all this is changing as society is changing. In Newham, on the SACRE, we are getting more and more faiths coming on board all the time. I think in this instance in particular, it may be the case that it is seen as something that could become a source of concern in the future and therefore there may be a need to have a discussion with the Church of England to raise what could become a potential problem. Personally, it has never bothered me.

Alistair Beattie, Faithnetsouthwest: I am from a regional forum of faith, *faithnetsouthwest*.

It strikes me that there does not seem to be a lot of knowledge or understanding about the work of SACREs. What possibilities are there for helping publicise good practice among SACREs and also enabling people to understand better their general work? I ask this because one thing I am taking away from today is the sheer variety and lack of

prescription.

Harriet Crabtree: I will ask Bill, as the Chair of NASACRE, to pick up on how to make the good work of SACREs known, towards the end of the afternoon. We will now hear from Ken Johnson and Rachel Heilbron.

Ken Johnson, Nottinghamshire SACRE

Following on from what was just said, I think that what SACREs need should be made clear to local authorities as well as to schools and faith communities. A lot of teachers do not know what a SACRE is and many faith groups seem unaware of SACREs. I think this also goes for knowledge levels where inter faith groups and networks are concerned. A lot of people in different faith groups are not aware there are local inter faith groups. So we need to look at how we increase awareness of SACREs and give good publicity to them and to inter faith work.

Rachel Heilbron, Three Faiths Forum: The Three Faiths Forum, of which I am the Project Director, is a national inter faith organisation that works with young people in schools on a daily basis. Our programme is rooted in the idea of bringing people in to schools and showing young people real people who live their faith every day. This helps them understand the diversity of beliefs *within* faiths as well as *between* them. I am sure there is some work that SACREs and local inter faith groups and organisations like ours can do together in terms of getting more people trained up to go into schools and run really exciting innovating programmes. There is an outdated perception of RE being a boring subject but we all know that if we work in exciting ways we can really change it to make it one of the favourite subjects of young people.

I also wanted to share that we have just been given a tender to run a national programme to create links between faith schools⁵. This will create links between schools with single faith populations in different local authorities. Our

5 The Three Faiths Forum is now running the Shared Futures programme that supports links between single faith schools. The programme is associated with the national School Linking Network (SLN) and is supported by the Pears Foundation and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

remit involves creating links between schools and then developing some guidance⁶ on this so we would really value input of local inter faith groups and local SACREs in terms of supporting schools to get involved with a programme of this kind.

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you. Can I just say we are very pleased to have Rachel with us here today because the Three Faiths Forum is one of the few national bodies which works specifically on both inter faith issues and work with schools. They have been working energetically in a number of inter faith contexts and also increasingly with SACREs, I think, so it is a plus that she is with us today. Before we move on further, I would like to ask the panellists if there are other comments that have been made in the last few minutes on which they would like to offer their reflections.

Sophie Faber: In response to the comment about communication to schools about the work of SACREs, maybe one way in which this can be supported is through the re-introduction of the RE guidance Circular 1/94 to schools. We can help re-introduce to RE teachers the role of SACREs as well. Some of you may know that my Department, along with many other stakeholder groups, has been working on revised RE guidance and that includes a section on the role of SACREs. The plan is that this guidance will be finalised and published in the New Year and there will be wide dissemination.

Michael Metcalf: I just wanted to flag up, for anybody who is not aware of this, the fact that NASACRE has for the last four or five years been able to give awards of up to £5,000 to local SACREs for projects promoting inter faith dialogue and encounter among young people. We have given a further eight awards, many of them for £5,000, for this forthcoming academic year. They are in places like Torbay, Windsor and Maidenhead, Suffolk, Redcar and Cleveland – right across the country – as well as one or two London boroughs,

including Bromley. We look forward to their contributions to developing community cohesion through the development of work among young people.

I know that several people here have actually benefited from these Westhill/NASACRE awards. I would recommend that people take the opportunity to look up the NASACRE website (www.nasacre.org.uk) and to see the list of projects and some of the reports that have come in at the end of their term, which are posted there.

I would also like to comment that while we have not always had young people firmly in front of us during the discussions today, in NASACRE we are focused very much on working with young people. No matter what else SACREs may do, young people are the reason why we exist: to ensure that they have their entitlement to religious education and to become religiously educated people capable of being effective citizens in our country in the future.

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you very much. We have one last question from Helen Harrison.

Helen Harrison, Lancashire SACRE: I would like to follow up on what Sophie said first of all about the non-statutory guidance on RE. It is open to public consultation at the moment and there needs to be as many comments as possible on the draft text. There is a website link for people to respond to the consultation and that is www.qca.org.uk/curriculumconsultation. I urge you to respond to the consultation and show that RE does matter.

Somebody said earlier that it is very important that we model the commonality amongst the faiths and I wholly agree. In Lancashire we were privileged to have money from NASACRE to run a youth conference for our youth SACRE to work with special schools. One of the pleas that came from the young people was could they have 'authentic voices' and hear about

⁶ Three Faiths Forum is starting work with SLN in spring 2010 to further support faith schools to be involved with linking as a way to promote community cohesion.

the difficult aspects of religion as it really is in the world, rather than just focusing on the positive commonalities. I think that it is important that we also model difference and that within SACREs we show how to respectfully disagree and help our young people to really engage with the difficult aspects of being fully human, as Dilwyn mentioned earlier. So my plea would really be that we look at the differences as well as the commonalities.

Ways forward: reflections from Co-chairs

Harriet Crabtree: I would like to thank the panel, very warmly, for their contributions. Thank you also to those of you who made comments in this session. We now come to the last part of today and I am going to invite Bill Moore as the Chair of NASACRE to offer some closing reflections.

Bill Moore: Thank you very much Harriet and thank you all very much. It has been a long and very interesting day. It seems like more than one day ago that I drove here to join this conference so to reflect on this in the space of about five minutes is going to be quite a challenge!

It is clear that we need to work on raising the profile of SACREs and of inter faith groups. There is a lot of good practice out there and NASACRE is committed to sharing this. We are also trying to promote an amended form of self-evaluation and reporting for SACREs. We are going to try and make it user friendly and encourage SACREs to use it so that we can share their good practice, including in inter faith dialogue. That is going to be quite a challenge and we recognise that.

Dialogue and building good relationships is something that has been emphasised a lot today. Dialogue is not always comfortable. I remember that I was in a pub in Reading during the teacher action in the mid-eighties. Somebody sat down next to me and I had a pint of 'water' on the table. This bloke asked me what I did for a living and I mumbled into my pint, 'I'm a teacher'. I mumbled because with the industrial action going on we were on strike at the time. He asked me what I taught and I told him I taught Religious Education. He said to me "You don't seriously believe that rubbish, do you? We have satellites, we have space travel, we have all sorts of things and nobody has ever seen

God." This man was probably nearly as old as I am now but I looked at him and realised I was talking to a person with the conceptual understanding of a seven-year-old. And that was a reflection of our culture, our communities and our society. This is not just about religious education and SACREs. It is not even just about inter faith groups, although I use the word 'just' there in both cases very carefully. It is about the kind of society we promote. I think the Government and local authorities have a role to play and appear to be doing so. I think that, given what has been said today, we are really ready to work in partnership with both local and national governments, to promote good work.

There was another experience that I would like to share with you. I taught at an all boys, all white school. I took a group of lower ability fifth year boys who were doing GCSE to visit a Hindu *puja* in a hall in Reading. This was about inter faith and inter generational dialogue. I took them along and, because it was during the day, the Hindu community was mainly old people. The people I took along were entirely young people. It was really interesting because the Hindu community was very friendly and they even asked me to perform *arti*. The lads laughed a little bit because apparently I rushed the ritual.

There was a degree of real tension because the boys did not know how to respond to the Hindu community and the Hindu community was trying to find ways of communicating with these young lads. Later, after we shared *prasad* (holy food) and as we were eating, a man came up to me and noticed that I was eating with my left hand. I will have to move in a minute to demonstrate this. He was one of those lovely men in whose face you could read life. He had this beaming grin and he said, 'I see you are eating with your left hand,'

drawing the attention of the young lads I had brought with me. And he said, 'We don't eat with our left hand. This is what we do with our left hand,' and he turned around with his back to me and the boys and made a gesture. Immediately, these young lads realised that what they were responding to was somebody who was human, who had humour, who wanted to build bridges and pull down barriers. The mood of that meeting changed. You had inter faith and inter generational dialogue and the lads came away buzzing. They had made a journey. They had taken a step in their lives towards understanding themselves and other people. They did more learning after that than they had done before.

We need to make sure that we are not just seeing this from our own perspective but we are seeing diversity in life through a kaleidoscope and we are also swapping kaleidoscopes with other people and seeing diversity in diversity. Members of NASACRE and SACREs, and that includes me, have got to get used to recognising that this is not just about children or just about focusing on schools. That is one thing that I will take away from today. Ultimately it is about recognising and sharing human identity within difference; that we all have an identity but we all share that identity in different ways. The risk of not recognising this is that we then focus on difference and people really do not put enough emphasis on the shared search for what it means to be a person and what it means to be human. There is a lot of work to be done!

Harriet Crabtree: Thank you Bill.

I would like to reverse the normal finishing order and offer the thanks at this stage before one or two people have to go.

I would like to thank, very warmly, all the speakers and all the workshop facilitators and contributors who have helped make the day so interesting. I would like to thank, in particular, the NASACRE and Inter Faith Network teams: Denise Chaplin, Bill Moore, Michael Metcalf, Lynne Broadbent, Stella

Opoku-Owusu, Paresh Solanki, Hannah Mercer, Yi Ling and Dorothy Oxley, who is not here with us. I would also like to say thank you to staff at this venue and to the Saltley Trust for helping support the day.

Today's proceedings will be transcribed and put together and contributors will have their text checked with them ahead of publication. I very much take the point made earlier that one does not want shiny reports sitting on shelves but it is important that a report is produced as part of disseminating the learning from the day.

Coming out of the day, we are likely to be exploring some principles that might help SACREs and local inter faith groups work well together; perhaps encouraging SACREs and local inter faith groups to meet and discuss, possibly with their local authorities, what resources there are for educating about faiths in their areas and what else might be helpful; looking at ways in which even stronger joint projects can be developed; and coming back to Michael's point – always bringing the young people firmly into vision.

Obviously, there is the job of sharing information with people of all ages but, for SACREs in particular, the youth element is paramount and so involving young people and finding ways for these different types of organisations to work together well is vital.

The closing reflection I would like to offer is a personal one. I came to work for the Inter Faith Network back in 1990. One of the earliest people I met was the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn. He was a remarkable person. He was a Holocaust survivor, and he used to reflect on the fact that in the area in central Europe where he grew up as a child people of different faiths never actually went into each other's places of worship – Jews not into churches and Christians not into synagogues. He felt that this contributed to a profound lack of understanding and a lack of human sympathy that came from people failing to engage with each other. It was one of the things which fired him with a passion for

education and for inter faith work. Hugo left a great legacy, he was one of the founders of the Inter Faith Network for the UK and instrumental in the creation of initiatives like the pioneering Standing Conference on Inter-Faith Dialogue in Education (SCIFDE).

I think quite often about the conversations I had with Hugo. It does not matter what our faith or belief is, whether it is religious or not, there is a very fundamental principle that unless we live together, learn together and actually encounter each other in our different worlds, we are always open to a failure to understand and sympathise with each other's different lives and different beliefs. It seems to me – and indeed it seems to me even more strongly after today – that both SACREs and local inter faith organisations in their own ways, different but overlapping, make an enormous contribution to creating a society in which there is greater understanding. There can be few tasks, I think, more urgent than this.

I would like to close by thanking everybody who has contributed to today's event and who is continuing, through their work, to make such an important contribution to making our society a more engaged and mutually respectful one.

Workshops

Workshop A: How can local inter faith bodies complement the work of SACREs in relation to the content of the local RE syllabus?

Facilitator: Professor Brian Gates, Religious Education Council for England and Wales

Presenters: Jonathan Gurling, Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group; Guy Hordern, Birmingham SACRE; Yann Lovelock, Birmingham Council of Faiths

Points made in the opening presentations by Jonathan Gurling, Guy Hordern and Yann Lovelock

Guy Hordern affirmed the fundamental importance of accessing and developing working relationships with significant religious leaders in communities. He noted that faith communities are very much concerned about what children are learning. A SACRE has a statutory duty to look at the pattern of local faith groups in their area to communicate with them so that it has access to members who have both theological training and knowledge of the classroom.

He explained that Birmingham SACRE and its Agreed Syllabus Conference had benefited from outstanding faith members bringing their deep level of understanding and insight and, in turn, reporting back to their faith leaders on ongoing consultation. The faith communities of Birmingham feel ownership of the content of the syllabus given that the religious content was produced entirely by the faith groups in the city and they feature largely in a DVD called 'Faith makes a Difference' which contains films of young members of faith communities explaining their faith in the context of the '24 dispositions'.

The ongoing consultation between the Agreed

Syllabus Conference and the Birmingham Faith Leaders Group also led to the production of a new DVD for the Birmingham RE Syllabus called 'Religious Education in Birmingham'. This DVD contains two films – one made by Birmingham Faith Leaders and another by Birmingham parents. Both groups commend the syllabus and the films are designed to be shown to faith communities and school based parents groups and governing bodies.

Jonathan Gurling expanded on the nature and role of the Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group, which was formed in the aftermath of 9/11 with the aim of building good relations across the city for the benefit of everyone. He acknowledged that the concept of leadership in faith groups was a difficult one with which they continued to grapple but said that the Group functioned well none the less because its main focus is on the development of relationships of trust and mutual respect between its members. It is different in make-up from the Birmingham Council of Faiths and to the SACRE and there is no overlapping membership between the Faith Leaders' Group and the SACRE. The Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group, Birmingham SACRE and Birmingham Council of Faiths work together in a partnership and are beginning to look at how to co-ordinate better with others working on education issues.

Jonathan Gurling explained that the Faith Leaders' Group and SACRE have enjoyed three to four years of positive relations built through working together on common projects. In particular the faith leaders have actively supported the development of the new Birmingham Agreed Syllabus as a bold venture to establish religious education within the experience of the city's children. They have two common elements to which they are both committed: the statutory

development of the syllabus and additional work in other areas (such as collaborating with the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council on a high level conference in November 2009 on 'What faith offers to the good of the city').

Yann Lovelock expressed a concern about what he called a 'culture/concept gap' in knowledge which had emerged in the development of the agreed syllabus. By this he meant that a number of faiths – in particular the 'Dharmic faiths' – were being interpreted through frameworks which were appropriate more to other faiths (and in particular, Abrahamic faiths). To address this, an inter faith 'sub-group' – a 'Dharma group' – had been developed to highlight this issue and to enable an understanding of a long standing problem. It identified the need for a text book for teachers addressing the importance of being aware of the very different conceptual frameworks within different 'families' of religious traditions.

He went on to mention the Faith Encounter Programme which has trained 30 faith guides to show people around places of worship in ways which fits with the RE syllabus. This training programme was beneficial in the sense that it helped those trained faith members to understand where pupils were 'at'.

The following points were made during the discussion.

- Guy Hordern was asked how long it had taken from the initial invitations being sent out to faith leaders to agreeing on the final text of the Agreed Syllabus and about the nature of the infrastructure it took to facilitate this. He said that the process took about two years. There had been a drafting secretary who met with each of the groups comprising the Conference; an executive group and a scrutiny committee, consisting of members of the four SACRE committees and an RE Adviser, which had been put in place to review the material. There was also a Chair's Group, a Birmingham advisor and support

members, and a politician. These were 'parallel' blocks, with a regular iterative flow of information backwards and forwards. The whole project – Syllabus and DVD – cost approximately £200,000 over two years. Its outcome was available to all 'on-line' at www.birmingham-asc.org.uk

- A contributor from the South West noted that in Bristol there had seemed to be some reticence from the main mosques about the idea of providing 'faith leaders' as they could not speak for all mosques – just as Sikhs would not feel that they could speak for all gurdwaras. Individual places of worship probably felt that they could not 'speak for all'. The degree of collaboration with the local faith communities differed from the Birmingham experience which had a budget ten times as large and virtually had a full time administrator.
- Some SACREs are not particularly representative.
- One person commented that in their London borough 27% of the population are Muslim. The various mosques do not communicate well with each other and it is difficult to know how to pull them into a working partnership.
- Those SACREs which are better resourced should collaborate with other SACREs and help them strengthen their work.
- It is important to involve *all* faith communities in the process of community cohesion.
- RE teachers in Birmingham are free to select material from various religious traditions. There are no restrictions and they are encouraged to take professional responsibility by selecting material that reflects the pupils' family or cultural backgrounds. This helps to broaden their horizons and will contribute to community cohesion.

- It was suggested, in the context of the Birmingham DVD, that the teachers should concentrate on, say, three of the ‘twenty-four dispositions’. Pupils should not be told what to think, but rather, they should learn from their own (inner) resources.

Workshop B: Local inter faith bodies and SACREs – working together with and in schools

Facilitator: Helen Harrison, Lancashire SACRE

Presenter: Dr Jane O’Hara, Bath Interfaith Group, Bath and North East Somerset Faith Forum and Bath and North East Somerset SACRE

Key points made by Jane O’Hara in her opening presentation

Jane O’Hara talked about how Bath Inter Faith Group had been set up, what their vision was and what they do. She also talked about how Bath and North East Somerset Faith Forum came to into being in 2007.

Five members of Bath Inter Faith Group are representatives of their own faith on the Bath and North East Somerset SACRE. The Group is helping the SACRE to support schools. In this way, members of faith communities are able to meet RE teachers, representatives of the Local Education Authority (LEA) and co-opted members from other local institutions.

Between 2007 and 2008 Bath Inter Faith Group secured funding from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund of the Department for Communities and Local Government to work jointly with the SACRE, RE teachers and faith communities on a collaborative project: Linking RE Teachers and Faith Communities. Resources were produced from this project to be used by schools when visiting places of worship. The project uncovered a number of challenges faced by schools, such as the difficulty for teachers of forging links with faith practitioners; lack of awareness among members of faith communities of how their beliefs are

presented in school; and lack of dialogue on educational content when children visit a place of worship. The project also highlighted a degree of difficulty on the part of some teachers and some personnel at places of worship in engaging well with each other, rooted in the fact not all RE teachers necessarily follow a religion themselves and, in turn, most faith practitioners do not have teaching experience. So great care has to be taken to ensure the exchange is a positive and effective one.

Future joint work by Bath Inter Faith Group and the local SACRE in schools includes a sixth form conference on RE, involving representatives of local faith communities; an annual SACRE lecture with an ‘inter faith’ theme, aimed at sixth forms as well as the general public; and further development of resources, including artefacts, to help in the teaching of RE in local schools.

The following points were made during the discussion.

- Funding – the availability of funding for SACREs’ work, particularly around inter faith issues, varies greatly from one place to the other, and the same goes for inter faith groups themselves – whether funded by local authorities or otherwise.
- Could the Inter Faith Network and NASACRE compile on a regular basis a list of funding opportunities and make this available to SACREs and inter faith organisations?
- Many schools want to invite faith representatives to visit them and/or arrange visits to their community/place of worship. They tend to think that such a service should be completely free, even though this often requires a considerable amount of work for those coming in and even though the school may have a budget for community cohesion and various other pots of relevant funding. Some faith community representatives provide a service for schools free through good will, but it should not be taken for

granted and at very least travel expenses should be offered.

- Sometimes there is not enough preparation and training by the schools and faith community representatives before schools take their pupils or students to 'sacred spaces' or representatives from faith communities come into schools. As a result, the learning experience for the pupils can be very dry and limited. Learning activities must be put within an educational context and should involve prior preparation by all to make it an enriching experience for children. Schools and faith communities need to work together to ensure that the quality of learning for children is stimulating and enjoyable.
- Learning is key; children must have an experience where what and how they learn is dynamic. For example 'enquiry' models are particularly effective in putting the child at the heart of the learning. Schools need to look at developing this learning and experience in a variety of interactive ways, working with their local faith groups. Some kind of training is needed to ensure that this excellent contribution to community cohesion, as well as good RE, happens.

Power Point slides used during the presentation follow.

SACRE and Interfaith Groups Working Together

An example from Bath and NE Somerset:
Bath Interfaith Group working with
B&NES SACRE

Dr Jane F O'Hara
Vice-Chair B&NES SACRE
Secretary / Treasurer Bath IFG
Interfaith rep on B&NES Faith Forum
Bahá'í Faith practitioner

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Bath Interfaith Group – the beginnings

SHARIFH
(SHARing the Future in Hope)

1979 founded by Dr Brian Pamplin, a scientist at the University of Bath

1985 on - SHARIFH became Bath Interfaith Group

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Bath Interfaith Group in Action



SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

The Executive Committee

Druid [Chair]
Society of Friends [Vice-Chair]
Christianity [Treasurer]
Bahá'í Faith [Secretary]
Co-opted members of local Faith Communities:
Islam
Buddhism
Christianity
Judaism
Unitarianism
Christian Scientist
Family Federation

Patron: The Right Worshipful The Mayor of Bath

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Bath IFG Executive Committee

is responsible for:

- All the activities of Bath IFG, ensuring that these activities are in accordance with the stated aims;
- Convening the AGM;
- Exploring areas of engagement for Bath IFG;
- Promoting and encouraging new initiatives in interfaith work;
- Ensuring equal rights for all in the activities of Bath IFG;
- Maintaining links with the Interfaith Network for the UK and other interfaith bodies;
- Publicising the aims of Bath IFG;
- Overseeing the holding and lending of books belonging to Bath IFG Group library

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

The Executive Committee



SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

The Executive Committee

Also responsible for organising and publicising two Programmes of Events, each covering half of the year, with:

- events organised by Bath Interfaith Group, alone or in collaboration with local faith communities
- details of other interfaith events, both local and elsewhere in the South West
- other events of possible interest

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Bath Interfaith in action - 2009



March, in The Mayor's Parlour 'Home is the most important place'
April - 'Every Picture tells a Story - Christian Art: the Narrative of Faith'
May - 'A Time for Tranquility' music, and readings from the Bahá'í Writings.
June - 'The Significance of the Life & Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev'
July - Annual Interfaith Social
 a 'Bring and Share' event to celebrate 30 years of Bath IFG

Bath IFG - Membership

Membership of Bath Interfaith Group is open to all, irrespective of religion, race or gender

Members can expect to:

- Receive Programmes of Events [two per year];
- Meet people from other faiths;
- Have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with others in an environment conducive to the open sharing of ideas and beliefs;
- Have the opportunity to contribute to the growth and development of Bath Interfaith Group;
- Participate in the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and in the election of the Executive Committee

Public meetings of Bath Interfaith Group are open to all, irrespective of membership status

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Bath Interfaith in action – some previous events



Discussion on 'Morality without Religion'

Celebration of the Equinox with the local Druid community

A talk by the Vicar Theologian of Bath Abbey about the process by which Christianity became a separate movement from Judaism

Annual SACRE lecture 'Is Religion Dangerous?' Prof Keith Ward

Bath Interfaith Group



Bath Interfaith Group aims:

- to promote fellowship among those of differing faiths**
- to act as a forum, with its own programme of speakers and discussions**
- to provide information about local faith communities**
- to publicise interfaith events in neighbouring localities**

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Bath IFG Development of activities



Broadening our activities

What

- Interfaith conferences
- Interfaith projects

How

- Seeking support from funding bodies
- Working with other organisations

Why

- Raising the profile of interfaith in the area
- Fostering links with diverse Faith Groups

Bath Interfaith in action

Working with other Organisations

- Local groups – other IFG in the area: Frome, W Wilts and Bristol
- Islamascope
- Local Authority
- Mayor of Bath
- Regional IFG / organisations: faithnetsouthwest
- National IFG : Interfaith Network
- International Interfaith Centre in Oxford



Bath Interfaith in action

'Sacred Spaces' first interfaith conference in Bath - 2002



28th September 2002
Bath Interfaith Group, with the support and encouragement of the United Religions Initiative
Martin Palmer, Director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture (ICOREC), spoke about his work with The Sacred Land Project
Farhat Hussein, Researcher in Islamic Architecture and History at Birmingham University, spoke on Islamic Architecture
Peter Hulme described the very modern sacred space enclosed by the Baha'i House of Worship near Delhi – the so-called Lotus Temple

Bath Interfaith in action

B&NES Faith Forum

- first Faith Forum in Bath & North East Somerset – formed 2007
- link body between B&NES Council and the local Faith Communities
- representatives from the major faith community networks active in B&NES: from different Christian traditions, as well as Islam, Judaism and 'other faiths' (this last is a representative of the Bath Interfaith Group)



Bath Interfaith Group was instrumental in setting this up
[5 of the initial 7 members were also involved with the IFG]

'Interfaith Matters' Conference - 2006



Bath Interfaith in action

Faith Forum - primary aim

not acting as an interfaith group

"Communication between Faith Communities and Public Bodies on social and community issues, in particular through providing a Faith Forum Representative to sit on the Local Strategic Partnership committee of B&NES Council".

Bath Interfaith in action

'Interfaith Matters' – FCCBF-1 funded

major participants:

- Deputy Mayor of Bath
- Chairman of B&NES Council
- Chief Inspector of Avon & Somerset Police
- Rev Marcus Braybrooke – internationally respected worker in Interfaith
- Representatives of local faith groups: Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, Baha'i, Jewish
- Secular participants also

Bath Interfaith in action

Working with SACRE

5 of the members of the IFG are also representatives of their religion on SACRE – and have been for several years



Bath Interfaith in action

Working with SACRE

Enables members of Faith Communities to meet :

- o RE Teachers
 - o Representatives of the LEA
 - o Co-opted members from other local institutions [e.g. Prof of Dept Humanities at Bath Spa Uni]
- and vice-versa

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Collaborative project: Linking RE Teachers and Faith Communities

What was needed for success:

Availability of RE teachers
Adequate funding for supply teacher cover
Co-operation of the Faith Communities
Personal contacts

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Working with SACRE

Types of collaboration:

- o General SACRE role [syllabus / resources / training etc]
- o Visits to local schools from members of Faith Communities
- o Government Funding initiatives [via CDF] gave the opportunity to use the links to devise a project useful to both bodies: SACRE, Bath IFG – and also the Faith Communities

Bath Interfaith in action

Collaborative project: Linking RE Teachers and Faith Communities

Main areas of difficulty:

How to handle the funding
Estimating the funding
Finding enough RE Teachers [many were willing ...]

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Collaborative project: Linking RE Teachers and Faith Communities: Dec 07 – Apr 08



- funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF 2 [ref 3194]) of the Home Office
- Bath IFG working with SACRE, RE Teachers and FC
- Outcomes: links between RE Teachers and FC
- Resources to be used on school visits to Places of Worship
- KS 1-4

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Future prospects for collaboration

- Sixth Form Conference on RE – involvement of representatives of local Faith communities
- Annual SACRE lecture with an 'interfaith' theme – aimed at Sixth Forms as well as general public
- Further development of resources [artefacts etc] for the teaching of RE in local schools

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Collaborative project: Linking RE Teachers and Faith Communities

The project brought together the local Inter Faith Group, the Faith Communities, and other voluntary bodies working with various agencies of the Local Authority.

SACRE was the 'hub' – elements of all these sit on SACRE

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

What do we need?

Access to funding and support!

[a Development Officer would be nice...]

SACRE and Bath IFG – working together

Workshop C: How can local inter faith bodies and SACREs work to ensure that there is good information on religions and about inter faith issues available for use in their local area?

Facilitator: Jenny Kartupelis, East of England Faiths Council

Presenter: Cynthia Capey, Suffolk Inter Faith Resource and Suffolk SACRE

Key points made by Cynthia Capey in her opening presentation.

Cynthia Capey spoke about the work of Suffolk Inter Faith Resource (SIFRE). She explained that this is an educational county-wide charity which does a considerable amount of work with schools. It was launched at the time of the national RE Festival in 1991.

SIFRE has over 50 tutors from faith communities who are resources in themselves and are willing to speak about their faith and how they live their lives. Four SIFRE tutors (Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Humanist) also serve on the Suffolk SACRE. SIFRE arranges for tutors from faith communities to visit schools and for pupils to visit places of worship. SIFRE tutors lead assemblies, talk to single classes or year groups and run conferences.

Suffolk SACRE, in consultation with SIFRE, has produced *Guidance for schools*, which offers guidance both for visitors to schools and for schools receiving visitors. SIFRE has also been funded by the RE Adviser to produce some CDs on local faith communities and their festivals. SIFRE runs various courses which provide teachers and others with the opportunity to increase their knowledge. These have included an eight month session on 'Shared Stories of the Abrahamic Faiths' held in 6 centres around Suffolk and led jointly by a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim. This was much appreciated by those teachers who attended.

SIFRE also regularly produces resources including books with contributions on various topics by their tutors and others and has

produced a game called 'Diversity' which sells nationally.

Through SIFRE and its work with SACRE, including through its tutors, schools in Suffolk therefore have access to real people and real places of worship and can relate what they are learning to the local community.

Cynthia Capey also offered a number of observations on some of the personal challenges faced by individuals from smaller faith communities on SACREs and commented on the need to reflect the full diversity of religious traditions, including Paganism.

Resources and details of publications and services to schools can be found at SIFRE's website www.sifre.org.uk.

The following points were made during the discussion.

- SACREs and local inter faith bodies need to find ways to work together to ensure the availability of good material about faiths in their areas, making it available not only to schools but also to the wider community. This involves producing information and learning experiences for schools but also materials that are suitable for wider use.
- Local inter faith bodies and SACREs could explore together what resources are available and what else might be helpful.
- There are some very good resources around and it would be useful to draw all this material together into national or regional resources centres and to produce bibliographies and lists of resources.

Workshop D: How can SACREs and local inter faith bodies work well together, beyond the classroom, to engage young people in their areas in inter faith projects and learning?

Facilitator: Revd Preb Michael Metcalfe, National Association of SACREs

Presenters: Mohamed Seedat and Rev Canon Stephen Wilson of Faiths United (Tameside) and Tameside SACRE

Key points from the presentation by Mohamed Seedat and Stephen Wilson

The presenters put an emphasis on the key phrase in the workshop title: 'beyond the classroom'. They explained that Faiths United (Tameside) (FUT) has a formal constitution and involves the nine faith communities which are formally linked by the Inter Faith Network. It is part funded by the local authority who, initially perhaps, needed to 'tick boxes'. This has changed as the authority has seen the fruit of Faiths United's activities.

The Tameside SACRE is an Associate Member of the Faiths United and this means the two bodies can feed into each other's agendas. There is also involvement in Faiths United from local groups, including the police.

Faiths United (Tameside) and the local SACRE have both been supporting children and young people's conferences. At the 2007 event a set of display material and performances by the children on the final evening were both captured on a DVD sponsored by Faiths United. The 2009 Children and Young People's conference will be held during Inter Faith Week in November. Funding has been received for this from the Faiths in Action grants programme. A joint event is being held on the Friday night of Inter Faith Week with the inter faith group and the SACRE during which local sixth form students will be providing food from different countries.

Faiths United has held inter faith conferences which were also publicised in schools with the help of the SACRE. In 2006 around 120 people attended their first inter faith conference on the topic of the environment and water – a theme chosen as it was both symbolic and practical. Martin Palmer of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation spoke at the conference, along with speakers from five different local faith communities who talked about the significance of water to their faith. Two of these speakers were young people.

There were children's displays on water and a prayer tree and workshops for young people on how faith communities can help the environment. In 2007 over 100 people attended the second inter faith conference on community cohesion, at which IFN's Director, Harriet Crabtree, spoke. Young people facilitated their own workshops.

In 2008 over 300 visitors attended Faith United's Fun Day which the local authority and local housing association helped to launch. There were faith community stalls with artefacts and craftwork, a performance marquee with music, dance and recitations, a bouncy castle and games to bring children together, and a cricket match was held. Many of the stalls were manned mainly by young people and faith communities. In 2009 they held a Friendship Walk to combine informal dialogue with the theme of the environment. There was a guided walk, storytelling and a picnic.

Other initiatives have included producing a directory of Places of Worship which schools can use as preparation before their visits. Faiths United have also produced a directory of faith visitors which lists contact information of faith community members who have offered to give talks in schools. This is updated every two years. There is, though, some reluctance on the part of many schools to use the directories because they prefer to speak directly with the local Inter Faith Officer (Mohamed Seedat) instead whenever they need a member of the faith community to go into their schools.

In the experience of the presenters, it is important that:

- events should be funded and therefore ideally free to attend
- events/activities should have definite outcomes
- inter faith work should be developed in faith communities, local authorities and schools

- there needs to be careful consultation with teachers – this can lead to positive messages in the classroom, (for example, by consulting with teachers, Faiths United (Tameside) were involved in a school assembly to talk about the Friendship Walk)
- RE coordinators should take advantage of the wealth of resources available to them in the community
- people with drive and passion are involved: the people involved are an essential part of any project.

Other points about Faiths United (Tameside) experience made later in the discussion.

- The local authority asked Faiths United (Tameside) to be on the Community Cohesion Partnership and Preventing Violent Extremism group.
- In 2004 Faiths United (Tameside) had no funding – it was facilitated by the Tameside Third Sector Consortium (T3SC). From 2006–08 it received £20,000 per year from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund. In 2009 it received local authority funding of £35,000 and is hoping to receive this for 2010 as well. The Chief Executive of the local authority now uses Faiths United (Tameside) as an example for local strategic partnerships. The Assistant Chief Executive of the local authority took part in the Fun Day with his family.
- Sometimes one needs to work behind the scenes to achieve diversity. At the second AGM of Faiths United (Tameside) a Hindu was encouraged to stand as Chair; and at the last AGM a woman was encouraged to take the Chair.
- What can everyone learn from Faiths United Tameside's work with its SACRE? It is very helpful to have a supportive voluntary sector/community organisation, such as Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC). The local authority fund T3SC and their administration support has been invaluable. It was a T3SC initiative to launch the inter faith forum originally.
- It is very helpful to have a supportive local authority. The local authority Arts and Events Team funded Faiths United's Fun Day. Initially the local authority sat back to see if the inter faith forum would swim or sink. But then they saw that it was working and when the forum needed a paid development worker, the local authority saw the value of supporting the forum.
- Tameside's experiences are helpful but it is important to bear in mind that they cannot simply be replicated across country without adaptation to suit the needs of particular localities.
- It is important to develop a good working relationship with the local authority. Faiths United (Tameside) were given a place on the Local Strategic Partnership after two years of applying and have now been asked to deliver some work involving the police.

The following points by other participants were made during the discussion.

- Bradford District Faiths Forum is recruiting a staff member to help set up a young persons' forum and asked what challenges are involved in setting up such a forum.
- In Tameside, young people were approached through faith communities.
- It is difficult to know where and how to start a youth forum if faith communities are not connected to inter faith groups.
- Youth faith forums can occasionally be led by young people with adult support; or a formal young people's inter faith forum or SACRE can be set up. Young people themselves need to generate the enthusiasm and must own the initiative. Young people can work together spontaneously or a skilled adult can draw enthusiasm from them.

- Inter faith groups and SACREs need to consider the shape/form of their activities: not everyone wants to join a regular forum; young people may prefer to get together in other ways. Some young people feel they do not need inter faith forums as they already discuss inter faith issues in RE and do not necessarily want to work outside school time or go to extra events.
- Ways need to be found to increase awareness of the value of youth inter faith work. It is important to have enthusiastic, driven key individuals involved. Dedicated workers are needed to support youth forums.
- Inter-generational cohesion is also very important.
- The challenge is following up youth inter faith events and projects.
- Not all young people feel confident to talk – especially where there are no organisations to support them and numbers are low.
- SACRE meetings are held in schools in the London borough of Newham, which has both a ‘Junior SACRE’ and a ‘Student SACRE’ to give Newham children a place where they can discuss spiritual and moral issues that are important to them. The SACRE works with this.
- Newham SACRE received NASACRE funding to produce a sex and relationships DVD. Each DVD had 11 questions on it – faith community leaders and young people answered these questions. The Sex and Relationships DVD, bringing in the faith dimension, was carried out in Newham because the sex and relationship training in schools does not take faith into account. It is mainly aimed at avoiding unwanted pregnancy, but the children wanted to know, for example, how it felt to be in love. On the first DVD the adults answered 11 questions set by students SACRE; on the second DVD the children answered the questions – one said that being in love was probably like “friendship on fire”.
- Schools could be encouraged to raise the profile of inter faith dialogue by pointing out that this can help them achieve community cohesion targets.
- OFSTED could also give schools the impetus to raise the profile of inter faith dialogue.
- Sixth form colleges, for example, are inspected on cultural/spiritual development and so this gives inter faith groups and SACREs leverage to help to fulfil the criteria. The impetus can come from colleges, not just from faith communities.
- Hereford and Birmingham schools generally team up to carry out RE driven projects. Year 11 students did some work on ‘What it’s like to be a human’, facilitated by an RE teacher, and Year 8 students carried out work on ‘Prioritising values’. The all girls school was happy to do this work with the co-educational school. The young people then presented their findings.
- *FaithnetSouthwest* supported Somerset Faiths and Beliefs Forum in the production of a mobile exhibition of interviews with young people from different faith communities on topics such as ‘What is it like growing up in Somerset as person of faith?’ There was an accompanying DVD. This was funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, trusts, Somerset County Council and the police.
- It is good to encourage members of local inter faith groups to attend external meetings and seminars, to give them confidence. Being part of SACRE is an example of this.
- A participant said that his role as an inter

faith development officer was initially created by a third sector consortium using funding from the Change Up programme. He also said that it was not enough to have just one Development Officer across the whole region – it would be better to have one for each sub-region.

- It is important that everyone spreads and shares good practice.
- “Small” can have its advantages – people are not always prepared to travel so it helps if activities are local.
- Children do not see barriers in the same way that adults do and are not as concerned about offending others, nor as likely to do so.
- When visits are arranged to places of worship for children, the adults often want to come with them!
- Wellingborough is a small local inter faith group which has not worked with its local SACRE except from requesting a speaker from them. During One World Week they hold several events with over 100 people attending. These have included inviting a guest speaker and all faiths to take part in a talk, or a storytelling tent which is always popular, among others. They find that it is hard to engage young people in just discussing faith matters.



Workshop E: An Inter Faith Week is planned for autumn 2009. This could provide a useful opportunity for SACREs and local inter faith bodies to highlight aspects of their work – singly and together. What preliminary ideas do participants have on this?

Facilitator: Paresh Solanki

Key points made by Paresh Solanki and Warwick Hawkins

Paresh Solanki said that Inter Faith Week (IFW) would be a great way of profiling inter faith issues because it would offer a whole week of activities relating to these. IFN had proposed the idea of the Week to Government during the consultation which led to the publication in 2008 of the Government's document *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society*. IFN and Government are working in partnership in organising the IFW. The Week will run from 15 to 21 November 2009 in England and Wales.

There is a website with information about the Week at www.interfaithweek.org.uk.

Warwick Hawkins added that Scottish Inter Faith Week – which has taken place for a number of years – will be a week later than the Week in England and Wales. He went on to say that Inter Faith Week will encourage organisations at local and regional level to organise events, for example inter faith organisations, schools and SACREs. Regional faith forums in England will be listing events for their regions on their websites. The national launch of the Inter Faith Week is planned for 12 November in London.

This year's Inter Faith Week is a one-off event in terms of direct Government involvement; but if it is successful, the faith communities may well wish to organise a similar Week again.

The following points were made during the discussion.

- Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum (WFFCF) has received funding of £3,000 from the council for an activity during Inter Faith Week. There are several events planned including "Food, Friendship and Faith". It is planned to organise debates between faith communities, centred on controversial topics, for example "Are all religions the same?" Other WFFCF planned Week activities include inter faith football matches, and a discussion on combating hate crime which will be coordinated by the Metropolitan police and a discussion on combating hate crime. It is possible that football matches could be between inter faith teams, different age groups, religions, geographical area and not just teams of different faiths. Plans also include activities relating to faith and the economy and inter faith walks on the two Saturdays, when as many religious buildings as possible will be open and people can walk to these buildings and have dialogues. WFFCF are working closely with Islam Awareness Week which takes place at the same time, to make sure the activities do not clash. WFFCF and the local

SACRE have agreed that the Faith Communities Forum will organise Inter Faith Week, and next year SACRE will organise the Religious Education (RE) week.

- Kirklees Faiths Forum will have Week activities including auctions, music and cooking. Faith leaders will be meeting. There are seven faith centres in Kirklees and each one has a learning theme and will be tackling some difficult and controversial issues. Faith centres will be trained to deliver different packages and engage with members of host communities. Interfaith Kirklees (schools), an educational project linked to Kirklees Faiths Forum, will be working with the schools and the Faith Centres on special Learning Packages for the national week.
- In Norfolk, there is a plan to hold a Symposium at the Anglican Cathedral involving secondary school pupils specialising in RE. Other activities include visiting mosques, activities in schools, and an 'inter faith market place'. This last idea is interesting in that it allows each faith to tell participants about themselves and for teachers to 'borrow' a faith representative and ask them about their belief and religion. This should help to promote understanding between people with religious beliefs and people without religious beliefs. There will also be a mobile panel which will go into schools, holding discussions and Question and Answer sessions. For such discussions they plan to have themes, such as "What do I believe?"
- In Norfolk, there is a relationship between inter faith groups and SACRE. Both seek to sustain and promote inter faith relations. There are Muslim, Hindu and Baha'i Norwich Interfaith Link members on the SACRE.
- It might be good to involve celebrities in Inter Faith Week.

- Kirklees Faiths Forum has plans to involve Signature (a group of street dancers). One of the contestants in Britain's Got Talent was from Waltham Forest.
 - Sixth formers should be encouraged to get involved, eg through debates. The Three Faiths Forum is organising an Inter Faith Week event involving sixth formers.
 - There is one member of Leicester City SACRE who is also on the local council of faiths. SACRE and the inter faith body have not to date made it their aim to work together. Organising an event for Inter Faith Week together could help build the relationship.
 - Inter Faith Week events should involve 'deeper conversations' and be 'inclusive' for all faiths.
 - Sport could be highlighted in Inter Faith Week. We should consider introducing role models including footballers, cricketers and athletes of different faiths. For instance, if Muslim women wearing headscarves are shown participating in games, it could help break down stereotypes.
 - Sport is a neutral way of attracting people to inter faith events. At the sporting events, leaflets of other inter faith activities could be given out, food could also be shared, and so on. Some research is being undertaken into the relationship between sports and inter faith by St Philips' Centre in Leicester. In Bedford there are Christians, Muslims and Sikhs involved together in basketball and cricket.
 - A question was raised as to how to encourage people who have not participated in inter faith events in the past to be involved in Inter Faith Week. An example was given about Northampton Inter Faith Forum which has been linking with young Muslim women about issues affecting them. The Forum was used as a base to discuss their issues, and in some cases, depending on the issue at hand, helping them to become involved in inter faith activities.
 - There can be difficulties between people of different faiths where there is suspicion towards each other. Inter Faith Week can help break down these barriers.
 - Ignorance is also a problem and people need to have a chance to meet and get to know each other. For example, there is a lot of linking of schools going on, such as among the Leicestershire village schools where different faiths rarely interact with each other otherwise.
 - We must talk about inter faith issues, and be ready to "agree to disagree", but there has to be dialogue. In High Wycombe, where there was a lot of tension between the police and local communities, many initiatives have been introduced to build good relations such as peace walks and sport events.
 - It is very important to work with young people during Inter Faith Week. The activities involving young people can spin off to adulthood in the future. The Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum has organised a youth inter faith forum. We also need to educate people about their own faith. Young people born into a faith often cannot properly describe it.
- Workshop F: What guidance might helpfully be developed for local authorities and other public agencies on the respective roles of SACREs and local inter faith bodies – as education resources; consultative sounding boards; partners for community cohesion – and on the importance of supporting and working well with both?**
- Facilitator: Brian Pearce, the Inter Faith Network*
- Presenters: Duncan Struthers and Mike Gettleson, Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and*

Key points made by Duncan Struthers and Mike Gettleson

Duncan Struthers said that Hillingdon Council and other public sector bodies, had taken a greater interest in inter faith matters in recent times. It has to be recognised that the Council has a limited capacity to engage individually with the over sixty-plus faith communities in Hillingdon but can relate and work with the Hillingdon Inter Faith Network.

Where local authorities have recognised that faith still plays an important part in the community and this has been accepted as a 'given', an almost overwhelming number of issues emerged, for example, the link between bereavement and school exclusion rates. Where schools are proactively involving faiths, and others, in bereavement care for individual pupils their exclusion rates are reduced.

Another recent example was where the borough Education Welfare Officer (EWO) identified a link between swimming lessons and absences. The schools discovered that children had been asked to remove arm bracelets, because of health and safety requirements. It was agreed that advice needed to be given by the local authority (with support from relevant bodies including the SACRE) to swimming supervisors to let them know that wearing the band was not a health and safety problem.

It is difficult to measure the impact of religious issues. When the Primary Care Trust (PCT) was invited into schools to inoculate children, there was a lot of resistance initially from parents. However, parents who were members of the Catholic Church began to talk with fellow parents in the Sikh community who were, as a result, convinced of the desirability of this step.

The Hillingdon Inter Faith Network was exploring other issues of common concern, including:

- the need to include faith buildings in the borough's emergency planning as centres for the distribution of medicine were there to be a pandemic
- the desirability of all faith buildings advertising that they accept 'breast feeding'
- the need to ensure that faith needs were covered in the borough's long term development plans.

Mike Gettleson said that he had become a SACRE member about 10 to 12 years previously. When he joined it, he had no idea what it was all about. Joining a SACRE meant a steep learning curve for faith community members.

In Hillingdon there is a strong link between the SACRE and the Hillingdon Inter Faith Network (HIFN). They have found it is important to establish a reporting structure with a 'communication path' between the SACRE and the local inter faith organisation. In Hillingdon the councillor involved and the Director of Education both helped with establishing a reporting structure of this kind for Hillingdon SACRE and the Hillingdon Inter Faith Network. The media will always whip up negative stories so it is very important that there is a reporting structure and other mechanisms through which faith communities can ensure that their perspectives are being heard.

Mike Gettleson commented that although SACREs are statutory bodies and local inter faith bodies are not, the roles of both are equally important. His impression was that SACREs and local inter faith bodies working together could contribute significantly to reducing inter racial tensions and problems. Part of the role of faith representatives on both SACREs and local inter faith bodies was to get across the idea of why the success of inter faith work is crucial to education. It enables young people to understand different faiths better. Councillors had been invited to the Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and there

was also a regular inter faith breakfast to showcase its work to which local dignitaries, including local councillors, were invited.

As a result of a one-day symposium on school food, it was found out that a school was using halal products for all its catering on the basis that it would simplify the task of having to provide different food products for the school. However, a Sikh representative had pointed out that this was inconsistent with the teachings of Sikhism which he said did not allow eating halal food. It was clear that better communication was needed between the school and parents. It was a two-way requirement and feedback was important.

Brian Pearce said that in the Government's document *Face to Face and Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society* there was a recommendation to review the guidance in *Faith and Community*, which had been published in 2002 by the Local Government Association in association with a number of partners including the Inter Faith Network. The principal target audience for this guidance had been local authorities. It might be helpful to suggest to those working on possible new guidance the inclusion of material about the kind of issues touched on in the presentations the workshop had heard. But alternatively perhaps they could be picked up in the planned revised edition of *The Local Inter Faith Guide*.

The following points were made during the discussion.

- Harrow is the most *religiously* (as distinct from racially) diverse borough in London – indeed in the UK. The local authority is therefore understandably interested in engaging with faith communities. Harrow Inter Faith Council (HIFC) always takes part in the Remembrance Day service in November and its work is appreciated and respected by the local authority. HIFC has received a mayoral award certificate. Councillors sit on the SACRE in Harrow and the SACRE 'shop-windowed' some of its work in schools for the councillors to see.

Young people from the Youth Parliament also sit on Harrow SACRE.

- In Harrow, there have been queries by teachers as to whether there is an overriding religious reason why protection bands should not be removed in certain situations.
- On the issue of communication, Hillingdon SACRE wanted one Muslim representative from the Hayes area but there were five different Muslim groups in the area that did not seem to be in communication with each other so this made it very difficult to arrange proper representation. Good intra faith engagement is essential for joint SACRE and local inter faith work.
- It is important for the distinctive voice of each faith community to be heard.
- Two-third of faith schools are Church of England schools and how they are promoting the inter faith agenda is of particular importance.
- Faith communities could be very useful on the issue of disaster planning and, as they are found across the whole borough, their places of worship could be used as gathering and rest places if there was a disaster.
- Hillingdon SACRE and HIFN have produced documents on bereavement.
- Northamptonshire SACRE has had difficulties as a result of support being withdrawn due to political differences. Unless politicians, local authorities, and councillors support SACREs, it is difficult for them to make effective progress. In such cases, inter faith groups may have an advantage over a SACRE, especially if they are self-supporting.
- At an emergency planning meeting in Wellingborough, there was a round table where a request was made for community

leaders of faith groups. As a result those who were there as faith representatives, but not 'leaders', were not able to remain in the meeting. A local authority needs to realise that it is individuals who actually make the difference and not necessarily 'faith leaders'.

themselves beyond capacity. Any future guidance could usefully address the representation issue. Future guidance will also need to reflect the supporting and challenging role of SACREs and local inter faith bodies. Commitment and continuity are important issues to be mentioned in it.

- There needs to be more mutual understanding between local authorities and faith communities. The latter cannot ask for representation without having a formal structure to facilitate this.
- 'Representation' is only effective if an organisation is capable of taking on the associated responsibilities. There is a distinction between 'representing' and 'being representative of'.
- Wellingborough Inter Faith Group was not set up to be representative and would therefore not be seen by its local authority as 'representing' the area's faith communities. The Forum is more of a social and personal network.
- There is currently a clash of cultures in the sense that local authorities have always worked democratically whereas faith communities often have appointees, (who are sometimes self appointees). There is an issue in terms of how accountable faith communities are in the way they engage and work.
- Some groups are driven by policy and the need to engage, for example, on the cohesion agenda.
- In Wales, how faith representatives on SACRE are identified by SACREs in Wales may be an issue worth exploring. For example, how do SACREs try to reflect their local context in terms of identifying the relevant faith groups for its membership?
- From a SACRE perspective, the net could be widened in the search for representatives but there are dangers both of duplication and of people stretching themselves beyond capacity.
- There are problems about the capacity of faith communities to engage effectively with the public agenda.
- A useful insight into how local authorities use local inter faith bodies and SACREs to consult is *Local authority engagement with faith groups and inter faith organisations*, Local Government Association and the Inter Faith Network, 2008.

Seminar participant list

Mrs Cynthia June Bailey, Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Mr Rummy (Ravindra Singh) Bajaj, Staffordshire SACRE
Mr Shan Barclay, Norfolk SACRE
Mr Alistair Beattie, Faithnetsouthwest
Mr Syd Bill, Burton Upon Trent Inter Faith Network
Ms Lynne Broadbent, Independent Consultant
Ms Cynthia Capey, Suffolk Inter Faith Resource and Suffolk SACRE
Ms Denise Chaplin, National Association of SACREs
Mr Ted Cooke, Waltham Forest SACRE
Mrs Minou Cortazzi, Leicester Council of Faiths
Dr Harriet Crabtree, Inter Faith Network for the UK
Mrs Marjorie Crombie, National Association of SACREs
Mr Roger Daniels, Sheffield SACRE
Mrs Jennifer Dixon, Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Mr Thuraisamy Durairatnam, Staffordshire SACRE
Dr Bertie Everard, Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group
Ms Sophie Faber, Department for Children, Schools and Families
Mr Nasar Fiaz, Bradford District Faiths Forum
Ms Mehru Fitter, Coventry Multi-Faith Forum
Professor Brian Gates, Religious Education Council for England and Wales
Mr Mike Gettleson, Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and Hillingdon SACRE
Mr Bruce Gill, Southwark SACRE
Mrs Elizabeth Guild, Leeds SACRE
Mr Jonathan Gurling, Birmingham Faith Leaders Group
Mrs Mary Hale, Harrow SACRE and Harrow Interfaith Council
Rev Dr John Hall, West Midlands Faith Forum
Mrs Helen Harrison, Lancashire SACRE
Mr Warwick Hawkins, Department for Communities and Local Government
Ms Rachel Heilbron, Three Faiths Forum
Mr Ralph Hodd, Isle of Wight SACRE
Mr Guy Hordern, Birmingham SACRE
Mr Dilwyn Hunt, Dudley SACRE
Mr Ian Hunter Smart, Durham SACRE
Mr David John Icke, Interfaith (Milton Keynes)
Mr Zahid Jawed, Buckinghamshire SACRE
Rev Ken Johnson, Nottinghamshire SACRE
Dr Ian Jones, St Peter's Saltley Trust
Rev Gareth Jones, West Midlands Faith Forum
Ms Jenny Kartupelis, East of England Faiths Council
Ms Manjit Kaur, Warwickshire SACRE
Mr Phil Leivers, Solihull SACRE
Mr Yann Lovelock, Birmingham Council of Faiths
Miss Hannah Mercer, Inter Faith Network for the UK
Rev Preb Michael Metcalf, National Association of SACREs
Ms Rosalind Miller, Islington Faiths Forum and Islington SACRE

Mr Bill Moore, National Association of SACREs
Dr Jane O'Hara, Bath Interfaith Group, Bath & North East Somerset Faith Forum and Bath & North East Somerset SACRE
Rev Malcolm Oliver, Northamptonshire SACRE and Northampton Inter Faith Forum
Mr Bernard Omar, Bristol Inter Faith Group and Bristol SACRE
Miss Yi Ling Ong, Inter Faith Network for the UK
Ms Stella Opoku-Owusu, Inter Faith Network for the UK
Mr Brian Pearce, Inter Faith Network for the UK
Ms Salma Piperdy, Gloucestershire SACRE
Mr David Pritchard, Coventry SACRE
Mr David Raven-Hill, Kirklees Learning Service
Ms Mary Judkins, Kirklees Interfaith (Schools)
Ms Fakhara Rehman, Kirklees Faiths Forum
Mr Carlo Schroder, Northwest Forum of Faiths
Mr Mohammed Seedat, Faiths United (Tameside)
Ms Isobel Short, Durham SACRE
Ms Tania ap Sion, Wales Association of SACREs
Mr Paresh Solanki, Inter Faith Network for the UK
Mrs Rosemary Stokes, Leicester City SACRE
Mr Duncan Struthers, Hillingdon SACRE and Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
Mrs Marianne Timms, Stratford Inter Faith Forum
Ms Amy Willshire, Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum
Mr Steve Reginald Wilson, Newham SACRE
Rev Canon Stephen Wilson, FaithsUnited Tameside and Tameside SACRE

Survey reports

I Analysis of returns from the NASACRE survey of SACREs

1) Introduction

Background to the project: The project arose from awareness on the part of the officers of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and of the Inter Faith Network for the UK of a lack of clarity between the roles of SACREs and those of local inter faith organisations. There was also a question as to whether, in any one local area, there was mutual knowledge and/or interaction between the members of the SACRE and local inter faith organisations. Therefore NASACRE, in collaboration with the Inter Faith Network for the UK identified a joint research project to ascertain the degree of mutual knowledge and interaction/activity between the two groups. The research was undertaken by separate questionnaires sent to SACREs and to local inter faith organisations.

Aims of the research (SACREs):

The research aimed to:

- offer SACREs the chance to reflect on the relationship between themselves and local inter faith organisations
- share information which could strengthen the cooperative working between SACREs and local inter faith organisations.

Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs):

Every local authority (LA) is required by law to set up and support a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. A SACRE is therefore a statutory body within each local authority. It is a forum where local communities of faith and belief, through their representatives, work in partnership with the LA and with its schools.

A SACRE is designed to represent all the interests of the local community.

It is made up of four committees, namely:

- christian denominations and other faiths represented in the local authority
- the Church of England
- teachers' professional associations / teachers in the LA
- the local authority (LA).

Individual representatives act as a bridge to their own community or sponsoring body. When SACRE makes a formal decision, each of the committees has equal voting rights – one vote per committee. In addition to the above, where there are communities of faith or belief with a very small local presence, individuals from these groups can be co-opted to SACRE

A SACRE's main function is to advise the Local Authority on matters related to RE in community, voluntary controlled and foundation schools and collective worship in community schools. In order to achieve this, SACREs monitor the effectiveness of the local Agreed Syllabus for RE, the provision for RE in schools, the quality of teaching and standards of pupil achievement, and monitor the provision and quality of collective worship in local schools.

SACREs also require the LA to review the local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years.

Statutorily SACREs:

- consider appeals from schools wishing to

modify the requirements of the law relating to collective worship for their pupils and, if appropriate, agree determinations enabling schools to modify the requirements

- produce an annual report of SACRE's work which can be shared with all communities and interest groups and reported to a national body, formerly QCA, now QCDA.

Historically, SACREs have taken an interest in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum and in other areas of school life.

Legally, SACREs can advise the Local Authority on the provision of training for teachers and give advice on methods of teaching RE, including the selection of teaching materials.

Traditionally, SACREs have always had a significant role in the development of positive relationships between local communities of faith and belief, an initiative now known as community cohesion. In the past, HMI (government inspectors) have judged SACREs on their contribution to the promotion of social and racial harmony and on their partnership with the L.A, although this was not part of SACREs' statutory role.

The distinctions between SACREs and local inter faith organisations:

In summary, a SACRE is distinct from an inter faith group in that:

- it is the legal responsibility of every Local Authority to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
- a SACRE's prime role is its responsibility to the Local Authority (LA)
- a SACRE's prime concern is with Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools and colleges
- a SACRE must produce an Annual Report which is submitted to the former Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

(QCA), now QCDA.

However, in that a SACRE includes representatives from local communities of faith and belief in a forum where issues of mutual concern and interest are discussed, there is a degree of commonality between a SACRE and a local inter faith organisation.

2) The research project

Questionnaires were sent to each of the 152 SACREs in England during April 2009. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at Appendix A.

The overall aim of the questionnaire was to explore the areas of knowledge, collaboration and overlap at a local level between SACREs and inter faith organisations or forums.

The questions sought to ascertain from SACREs:

- the level of awareness of local inter faith organisations
- the degree to which members of SACRE were also involved in local inter faith organisations
- perceptions of the relationship between the SACRE and local inter faith organisations
- examples of specific projects where there had been collaboration between SACRE and the local inter faith organisation.

Responses to the questionnaires sent to SACREs

Of the 152 questionnaires sent to SACREs in spring 2009, a total of 77 responses were received. (See Appendix B) The questionnaires had been sent to SACREs via their clerks or administrators and the return of 77 responses was considered positive in the light of the infrequency of SACRE meetings, with the majority of SACREs meeting only once during the spring term.

Question 1

| Number of local inter faith organisations known to SACREs | | | | | | |
|---|------------|---|----|---|---|-------------|
| SACREs and Regions | Don't know | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | More than 3 |
| SW | | | 2 | 2 | | |
| SE | 1 | | 5 | 5 | | 1 |
| London | 1 | 4 | 10 | 2 | | |
| East of England | | 1 | 2 | | 1 | |
| W Midlands | | | 9 | 3 | | |
| E Midlands | | 1 | 4 | | | 1 |
| NE | | 1 | 2 | 1 | | |
| NW | | 1 | 5 | 3 | | 1 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | | 1 | 4 | | 2 | |
| Other | | 1 | | | | |

In general, responses to the questionnaire were received from the Clerk to the SACRE, while others were received from the RE Consultant supporting SACRE.

Nature of the responses

Question 1

Are you aware of a local forum of faiths or

inter faith council which brings together members of the major faiths in your area? Yes/No If so, what is its name?

Summary

It was apparent from the responses received that the majority of regional SACREs across the country were aware of at least one local inter faith organisation, with a good number of

Question 2

| Number of SACRE members also on local inter faith organisations | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|-------|-------|---------------|
| SACREs and Regions | Don't know / no group | 0 | Yes (number not given) | Yes 1 | Yes 2 | Yes 3 or more |
| SW | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| SE | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| London | | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| East of England | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 |
| W Midlands | | | 2 | 4 | | 5 |
| E Midlands | | 2 | 4 | 1 | | 1 |
| NE | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| NW | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 1 | | 5 | | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 1 | | | | | |

SACREs being aware of more than one local inter faith organisation. In some regions, the SACREs appear to be unaware of any local inter faith organisation and this is particularly surprising in some regions, for example, London and the East Midlands, both areas of religious and cultural diversity and therefore areas where the presence of inter faith groups might be expected.

Question 2

Are any members of your SACRE involved in this/group/s, and/or is your SACRE represented in any way on these groups? (Please give details).

Summary

In each region bar one at least one member of the SACRE is a member of a local inter faith organisation.

NB. 'Other' refers to Guernsey, Jersey and the Services Education SACRE with little/no representation from faith communities other than the Christian community.

Question 3

How do you perceive the nature of the relationship between SACRE and these inter faith group(s)?

Summary/overview of responses

There was a wide range of responses to this question and these have been grouped below. In general, positive and negative responses were spread across the SACREs in each region, with no one region providing wholly positive or negative responses.

Negative responses included: 'non-existent'; 'no knowledge of what they (the inter faith organisation) do'; 'in need of development'.

Responses indicating some co-operation included: 'occasional liaison', 'mutually supportive', 'thought they have clear and distinctive roles to play in the local community'

Responses indicating good collaboration included: 'strong and positive, with

educational issues and input from the RE Adviser being a regular part of inter-faith network meetings'; 'supportive ... members of inter faith groups can be a resource on which to draw for schools visits and for SACRE membership'; 'sharing good practice and giving assistance with expertise and knowledge in planning local and countywide events'; 'good with two joint meetings each year for the executive members of SACRE and the Faith Exchange group'.

It is interesting to note that the above responses indicating good collaboration were frequently associated with a significant number of SACRE members also being members of one/more of the local inter faith organisations.

Responses indicating that time factors inhibited a collaborative relation between the two groups included: 'inter faith events are organised at times which are not convenient for schools or other SACRE members and are advertised with very short notice'; 'it is difficult to devote time to build relationships – we don't have any!'

There was, however, an expressed desire on the part of several SACREs that the relationship and collaboration between SACRE and the local inter faith organisations be improved. The following is one such example: 'We have been struggling for some time to try and establish an effective relationship and would like to see a relationship of co-operation and the sharing of common-based knowledge and experiences.'

Question 4

Has your SACRE worked with one or more local inter faith groups on particular projects? (Please give brief details)

Summary

The responses indicate that there is a reasonable degree of collaboration between SACRE and local inter faith organisation. This collaboration is wide-ranging but four key areas are notable, namely, the exchange of knowledge and presentation of information

Question 4

| Region | No | Yes | Detail |
|----------------------|----|-----|--|
| South West | 2 | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interfaith Forum seminar series: Our Neighbours in Faith • Youth Interfaith Workshop: Science and Religion • Faith Forum for Schools • Guidance on Community Cohesion • Holocaust Memorial Day celebration |
| South East | 6 | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Cohesion events for Years 11/12 with Year 5/6 pupils • Community Cohesion Conference for 20 schools • Diversity Day in Town Hall • Work with Youth Diversity Forum on sex education • Sixth form conferences • Holocaust Memorial Day |
| London | 13 | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holocaust Memorial Day • Working group on community cohesion • Faith visitors to schools; faith communities hosting visits to places of worship • Youth Interfaith Forum • Information about faiths on LA website • Conferences and events for infant, junior and secondary schools |
| East of England | 1 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SACRE with Sikh, Muslim and Christian groups working on NASACRE inter faith project • Jewish Way of Life Exhibition • Annual workshop for teachers and heads: Faith Trail to Places of Worship • Holocaust Memorial Day • Resource for schools: Abrahamaic stories |
| West Midlands | 8 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith Guides • Multifaith day events for children • Directory of Places of Worship |
| East Midlands | 6 | 0 | |
| North East | 3 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School visits from faith members |
| Northwest | 6 | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVD on inter faith event for young people • Sixth form conferences • Faith visitor project linked to local syllabus • Website to link schools to faith groups • Faith trail for schools |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 3 | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish Way of Life Exhibition linked to Bradford Council of Mosques Centre • Directory of faiths • Joint 'faith to faith' conferences • Interfaith Kirklees – interactive visits to faith centre. Community workshops. • Youth inter faith dialogue opportunities |
| Other | 1 | 0 | |

Question 5

| Region | No | Yes | Examples of activities |
|----------------------|----|-----|---|
| South West | 3 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based inter faith panel evening: <i>The Problem of Evil</i> |
| South East | 7 | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance and Framework for visits to schools and by schools to places of worship • Jewish and Hindu Exhibitions • Festival Calendar competition • Divali and Winter Festivals celebration • Community Cohesion agenda: Extremism |
| London | 14 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge Builders: speakers for lessons, conferences and celebrations • Chair of SACRE on Holocaust Memorial Day celebration group • Faith visitors to schools, faith communities hosting visits to places of worship • Youth inter faith forum • Information on faiths for LA website • Conferences and events for infant, junior and secondary schools (see question 4) |
| East of England | 2 | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local faith groups provide access to speakers and for visits • SACRE with Sikh, Muslim and Christian groups working on NASACRE inter faith project (as question 4) |
| West Midlands | 9 | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with individual faith groups on exhibitions attended by other faiths • SACRE worked with Worcester Diocese on 'Every Faith Matters' for CE schools |
| East Midlands | 3 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting work of charity supporting visits from schools to places of worship • Training from faith representatives on how to speak to children • School twinning projects • SACRE meetings held in a variety of faith venues |
| North East | 3 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Office project linking Diocesan teams, SACRE and Ripon Cathedral |
| Northwest | 6 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual members • 'A SACRE member is working with a faith forum to develop Madrassah education as part of the PREVENT agenda' • Work with local council of mosques on 'Understanding Islam' project |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 5 | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Annual lecture with one of the earliest inter faith groups • Participate on the Civic Network – joint action and statements on national issues e.g. terrorism • Museums and Galleries service to produce a faith garden • BSF programme • Youth inter faith activities • Bradford Schools linking project • Bradford Inter Faith Centre visits for SACRE members and teachers |
| Other | 1 | 0 | |

about faith traditions, faith members visiting schools/visits to places of worship, celebrations marking Holocaust Memorial Day and the consideration of community cohesion issues. It is encouraging that many SACREs engage with youth-based activities such as Youth inter faith workshops/dialogue.

Question 5

Has your SACRE worked with any other local inter faith initiatives on particular projects? (Please give brief details)

Summary

While the nature of some responses echoed those of the previous question, in general responses were broader and reflected the specific needs of individual local authorities and regions. The responses indicate a wide range of opportunities for SACREs and local inter faith organisations to collaborate and respond to local and regional issues.

Question 6

What issues, if any, have emerged from such projects, or more generally from any overlap of activity or shared concern?

Summary/overview of responses

This question asked that emerging issues be shared and following responses highlight those expressed by more than one SACRE.

- Sources of funding are an issue.
- In a mono-cultural/faith environment, it's a very slow process.
- Members of inter faith networks are uncertain about educational issues, especially RE.
- Both organisations find it difficult to ensure representation from all local faith groups.
- Need to educate members of faith communities on each group to speak about faith issues in schools, so that the lines between proselytising and education are understood.

The following four issues were expressed by four different London SACREs and seemed to suggest positive reasons for and ways forward in terms of collaboration between SACREs and local inter faith organisations.

- 'There is a clear message that young people have a heart for their faith and are determined to engage with others of faith or none.'
- 'There is a need for transparency, respect and common purpose.'
- 'Community cohesion is ... the main and the driving force for us trying to establish a relationship with the forum and has been regularly discussed and identified by our SACRE.'
- 'It is clear that the faith community leaders can work quite well together and share some real concerns for the well-being of our local community.'

Finally, it is interesting to note that as a result of collaboration with its local inter faith group, one SACRE began to question whether it was truly representative of the faiths in the local area and was reviewing its Constitution.

Question 7

Can your SACRE offer any example(s) of good practice in joint working? (please attach further information/reports if you have any).

Summary/overview of responses

Across the regions, there were only 25 positive responses to this question, which is fewer than half of the total respondents. These responses included the following examples.

- The Anne Frank Exhibition.
- Islam Awareness Week.
- An inter faith young people's conference.
- VI Form Conferences planned by SACRE but with considerable input from the inter

faith group.

- A young people's faith project – Faith and Fun Together.
- A SACRE-supported Inter-Faith Forum 4 Youth.
- The development, launch and on-going roll-out of the local authority's Faith and Values document.
- SACRE – sponsored inter faith days at schools.
- Packs on faiths sent into schools.
- Guidance for visitors was negotiated jointly with SACRE and inter faith groups.
- A SACRE Conference on community cohesion which involves developing inter faith links.
- Various training programmes including programmes to support visitors to schools, eg
 - The local inter faith group secured funding for a series of visits to schools to introduce children to our increasingly diverse society. SACRE was aware of the visits supported the endeavour and monitored the visits to two schools. The project was very successful and SACRE had given encouragement and support to the inter faith group to secure additional funding to extend the project to more schools.
 - The Chairs of the local inter faith forum and the SACRE collaborated to secure a speaker for a local church conference.
 - A Faith Visitor project provided training from SACRE to faith forum members to support their understanding of the local agreed syllabuses of RE and to discuss protocols and effective learning strategies.

- In-service training was provided for RE teachers through a visit to the local Sikh gurdwara.

Question 8

Have you any comments on your SACRE's experiences in this area, e.g. of working jointly with the local inter faith body (or other local inter faith initiatives), or equally of not being able to work jointly, or achieve a satisfactory mode of communication and mutual awareness?

Summary/overview of responses

As in the responses to Question 3, there was an expressed desire on the part of SACREs to develop positive relationships and collaboration with the local inter faith organisations. The majority of SACREs responding cited positive experiences to date while other SACREs commented on the difficulties of developing programmes of joint working due to a lack of time or lack of mutual understanding. Both the difficulties and positive experiences expressed in the responses provide valuable insights into effective working strategies.

Responses indicating difficulties in establishing joint working included:

- it is difficult to find out who the groups are
- SACRE has difficulty in communicating with faith bodies and faith communities owing to the communication channels that are open to us. We are reliant upon individual members ...
- a lack of time stops us from working on joint projects
- there is no inter faith group other than SACRE in our area so faith members do a lot of work in schools
- the inter faith body does not always want to listen to what schools need and what they offer is therefore not received warmly by schools as it misses the point.

Responses indicating positive experiences of joint working included:

- working with faith groups and receiving presentations from them facilitates good communication and joint participation in projects
- our SACRE has excellent working relationships (with inter faith groups), particularly in the places of worship where meetings are held
- open communication with faith groups has meant a shared understanding of protocols for schools negotiating with faith communities
- we have learned a lot and have broken down, we hope, some of the stereotypical attitudes that can be prevalent between faith communities.

Question 9

What is your perception of how your local authority understands the respective roles of your SACRE and the local inter faith body (if there is one)?

Summary/overview of responses

There were a significant number of 'not applicable' responses to this question and it became apparent that, in general, the respondents were not party to the local authority's understanding of the respective roles of SACRE and the local inter faith organisations.

Of those who did respond, several described the statutory nature of SACRE and the voluntary nature of inter faith groups. The following statements are indicative of the remaining responses received.

- It is an on-going challenge to communicate the function and value of SACRE, especially to elected members.
- Our County Council does not appear to understand either (ie SACRE or the local inter faith groups).

- Both are funded but in general Council Officers do not have a good grasp of the workings of faith groups.
- Our 'Celebrating Diversity Day' at County Hall involved both the SACRE and inter faith groups, so the LA is kept well informed.
- The LA is beginning to understand that it needs to take inter faith issues seriously in order to produce citizens equipped for life in the 21 century.

Question 10

Do you have any suggestions for projects where SACREs and local inter faith bodies might fruitfully work together to increase inter faith understanding and community cohesion?

Summary/overview of responses

Approximately a half of all SACREs responded to this question. Many of the responses related to work which was already being undertaken and much of this related to perceived current necessities rather than to creativity in terms of future projects. A small number of SACREs addressed possible challenges for future projects shared between SACREs and local inter faith organisations.

Responses relating to existing/necessary projects included:

- developing a website to promote and disseminate schemes of work, incorporating visits to places of worship
- improving the quality of visits to local places of worship and the delivery skills of visiting faith speakers into schools
- creating dvds / photographs as resources for schools in partnership with young members of local faith communities
- raising awareness among Faith Forum members of the role and nature of RE in schools
- developing a joint Calendar of Festivals /

events

- establishing a Youth SACRE
- developing shared membership of the community cohesion forum.

Responses relating to challenging future projects included:

- seeking the similarities in expression between faiths – what values in everyday life do all the faiths share? How can discussions with inter faith groups be usefully disseminated to schools?
- Interfaith Resilience Group: the provision of guidance on how members of faith communities can offer support at times of urgent public emergencies
- links with County Council Community Cohesion departments to develop knowledge about faiths and an understanding of moral, ethical and spiritual viewpoints as a fundamental foundation for community cohesion.

Question 11

A national ‘Inter Faith Week’ is in planning for November 2009 (for which dates are due to be announced shortly). Do you have any suggestions for joint events or projects which might be developed by SACREs and local inter faith organisations as part of the Week?

Summary/overview of responses

Of those SACREs responding, several had identified this as an agenda item for the next meeting and so currently had no firm proposals to offer. A number expressed concern regarding lack of funding to engage in joint projects and one identified a lack of time to prepare inhibited joint projects. This point had been a recurring response to the questions and might therefore be seen as a key factor inhibiting progress.

Responses received included the following suggestions.

- Visits to places of worship linked to the

Learning Outside the Classroom agenda.

- A SACRE conference for member bodies with presentations, celebrations or discussions on topical issues.
- A Youth SACRE national meeting.
- An inter faith event or conference.
- A theme of ‘How faiths support those in need’ with a focus on the need for support at a time of recession.

3) The findings: a summary

The overall aim of the questionnaire was to ascertain from SACREs:

- the level of awareness of local inter faith organisations
- the degree to which members of SACREs were also involved in local inter faith organisations
- perceptions of the relationship between the SACRE and local inter faith organisations
- examples of specific projects where there had been collaboration between SACRE and the local inter faith organisation/s.

The findings indicated the following:

1. Levels of awareness: While a significant number of SACREs were aware of local inter faith organisations, there were still many SACREs which were unaware of the existence of these. (Question 1).

2. Degree of joint membership: Responses to Question 2 indicate that the majority of SACREs include members who were also members of local inter faith organisations, with a significant number of SACREs having two or more members who were also members of these.

3. The relationship between SACRE and local inter faith organisations: Responses to Questions 3 and 8 indicated that there was a desire on the part of SACREs for a positive and collaborative relationship with local inter faith organisations. However, there were several issues which inhibited the development of such relationships, specifically, knowledge of the existence of the groups, a reliance on individuals to act as channels of communication, a lack of time and a lack of funding. Nevertheless, there were positive outcomes resulting from collaborative working, the following being one of the most powerful: *'We have learned a lot and have broken down, we hope, some of the stereotypical attitudes that can be prevalent between faith communities'*.

4. Examples of specific projects: Responses to Questions 4, 5 and 7 indicate that collaboration is wide-ranging with several key areas being common; these are the exchange of knowledge about the faith traditions, collaboration related to visits to places of worship and members of faith communities visiting schools, the joint planning of Holocaust Memorial celebrations and the consideration of community cohesion issues and events. There was also significant collaboration in youth activities such as youth inter faith workshops and dialogue. It was notable that SACREs and inter faith organisations collaborated to respond to specific local and regional issues.

Collaboration was strongest where there was a significant overlap in membership between the SACRE and the local inter faith group/s: the overlap in some instances related to the officers of each group but this was not necessarily always the case. However, where collaboration was successful and led to the sharing of knowledge and mutual understanding between the two groups, it involved an overlap in membership of more than one member.

- Practical reasons for the influence of the overlap of membership related to two issues, the frequency, or rather infrequency of SACRE meetings and the nature of SACRE meetings.

On average, SACREs hold four meetings in a school/academic year with each meeting lasting, on average, two hours. At each of these meetings, there are regular 'business' issues to be received and discussed; for example, the reviewing and re-writing of a local agreed syllabus, receiving OFSTED/local authority reports on RE in the LA's schools, the scrutiny and discussion of annual public examination data and the consideration of determinations.

These activities are set by the responsibility of the SACRE to the local authority. There is therefore, little time for creative, collaborative activity. In contrast with this, local inter faith organisations are able to meet on a more regular basis if members wish and to set their own agendas.

Some SACREs reported that the infrequency of their meetings and the nature of their agendas inhibited an instant response to inter faith initiatives – as one SACRE reported, 'We would like to do something for Inter Faith Week but it would take about 18 months of planning in SACRE meetings.'

4) Strategies for the Future

Factors influencing successful collaboration between SACREs and local inter faith organisations

Some key factors were clearly identified in the responses.

- The overriding factor influencing successful collaboration between the two groups was related to membership and this was reported by approximately 16 SACREs.

5) In conclusion

In order to build a positive and collaborative relationship between SACRE and its local inter

faith organisations, the following criteria would appear to be paramount.

- 1 Foster an overlap in membership between the two groups.
- 2 Identify opportunities to develop mutual knowledge between the SACRE and the local inter faith organisation/s e.g. through sharing agendas and reports.
- 3 Allocate time for the development of mutual understanding e.g. through short presentations on issues of common concern.
- 4 Allow adequate timescales when planning collaborative projects to enable SACRE to be involved.
- 5 Address financial constraints through seeking sources of funding for collaborative projects.

SACREs and local inter faith organisations have much to offer each other and to paraphrase a statement from one SACRE:

There is a 'need to take inter faith issues seriously in order to produce citizens equipped for life in the 21st century'

Survey analysis by Lynne Broadbent and Denise Chaplin.

represented in any way on these groups? (Please give details)

- 3 How do you perceive the nature of the relationship between SACRE and these inter faith group(s)?
- 4 Has your SACRE worked with one or more local inter faith group on particular projects? (Please give brief details)
- 5 Has your SACRE worked with any other local inter faith initiatives on particular projects? (Please give brief details)
- 6 What issues, if any, have emerged from such projects, or more generally from any overlap of activity or shared concern?
- 7 Can your SACRE offer any example(s) of good practice in joint working? (Please attach further information/reports of you have any)
- 8 Have you any comments on your SACRE's experiences in this area eg of working jointly with the local inter faith body (or other local inter faith initiatives), or equally of not being able to work jointly, or achieve a satisfactory mode of communication and mutual awareness?
- 9 What is your perception of how your local authority understands the respective roles of your SACRE and the local inter faith body (if there is one)?
- 10 Do you have any suggestions for projects where SACREs and local inter faith bodies might fruitfully work together to increase inter faith understanding and community cohesion?

Appendix A: Questionnaire

SACRE Questionnaire on working with local inter faith organisations

- 1 Are you aware of a local forum of faiths or inter faith council which brings together members of the major faiths in your area?
Yes/No
If so, what is its name?
- 2 Are any members of your SACRE involved in this/group/s, and/or is your SACRE
- 11 A national 'Inter Faith Week' is in planning for November 2009 (for which dates are due to be announced shortly). Do you have any suggestions for joint events or projects which might be developed by SACREs and local inter faith organisations as part of the Week?

Appendix B: Questionnaire returns: region by region

| | No. of SACREs | Responses | % responses |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|
| East Midlands | 8 | 6 | 75% |
| East of England | 10 | 4 | 40% |
| London | 32 | 17 | 53% |
| North East | 12 | 4 | 33% |
| North West | 22 | 10 | 45% |
| Other* | 3 | 1 | 33% |
| South East | 20 | 12 | 60% |
| South West | 16 | 4 | 25% |
| West Midlands | 14 | 11 | 78% |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 15 | 9 | 59% |
| Totals: | 152 | 77 | 51% |

*Other: refers to Jersey, Guernsey and the Services Education Centre

Appendix C: List of SACREs that responded to the survey

| | |
|---|--|
| Barking & Dagenham SACRE | Halton SACRE |
| Barnsley SACRE | Hampshire SACRE |
| Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire SACRE | Haringey SACRE |
| Bexley SACRE | Hartlepool SACRE |
| Birmingham SACRE | Herefordshire SACRE |
| Bolton SACRE | Hillingdon SACRE |
| Bracknell Forest SACRE | Hounslow SACRE |
| Bradford SACRE | Isle of Wight SACRE |
| Brent SACRE | Kent SACRE |
| Bromley SACRE | Kingston Upon Hull SACRE (joint response with East Riding) |
| Buckinghamshire SACRE | Kirklees SACRE |
| Calderdale SACRE | Lambeth SACRE |
| Cheshire SACRE | Lancashire SACRE |
| Coventry SACRE | Leeds SACRE |
| Croydon SACRE | Leicester City SACRE |
| Darlington SACRE | Leicestershire SACRE |
| Derby City SACRE | Lewisham SACRE |
| Devon SACRE | Liverpool SACRE |
| Dorset SACRE | Medway SACRE |
| Dudley SACRE | Middlesborough SACRE |
| Ealing SACRE | Newham SACRE |
| East Riding of Yorkshire SACRE (joint response with Kingston upon Hull) | Norfolk SACRE |
| East Sussex SACRE | North Lincolnshire SACRE |
| Gloucestershire SACRE | North Yorkshire SACRE |
| Guernsey SACRE | Northamptonshire SACRE |
| Hackney SACRE | Northumberland SACRE |
| | Nottingham City SACRE |

Nottinghamshire SACRE
Portsmouth SACRE
Redbridge SACRE
Rochdale SACRE
Rutland SACRE
Sandwell SACRE
Sefton SACRE
Sheffield SACRE
Solihull SACRE
Southampton SACRE
Southwark SACRE
Staffordshire SACRE
Suffolk SACRE
Tameside SACRE
Telford and Wrekin SACRE
Thurrock SACRE
Torbay SACRE
Waltham Forest SACRE
Warrington SACRE
Warwickshire SACRE
West Sussex SACRE
Westminster, City of SACRE
Windsor & Maidenhead SACRE
Wolverhampton City SACRE
Worcestershire SACRE

II Analysis of returns from the Inter Faith Network survey of local inter faith organisations

1) Methodology

Questionnaires were sent by the Inter Faith Network office to 212 local inter faith organisations (LIFOs) in England and Wales. The questionnaire is attached at Appendix A. It was designed to find out about LIFOs' engagement with Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) across England and Wales. It covered the following topics.

- The perception by LIFOs of their relationship with SACREs in terms of their respective roles and engagement with each other.

- Overlap in membership and areas of joint-working.
- Perceptions of their local authority's understanding of the respective roles of the LIFO and SACRE.
- Challenges in working well together and suggestions for better joint-working.
- Good practice in joint working which might be more widely shared.

Questionnaires were sent out by email in March with a reminder in April. 52 responses were received – just over 25%.¹

Table 1: Local Inter Faith group questionnaire returns, region by region

| Region | No of local inter faith groups to which surveys sent | Responses | % of groups responding |
|----------------------|--|-----------|------------------------|
| East of England | 20 | 6 | 30% |
| East Midlands | 15 | 3 | 20% |
| London | 38 | 10 | 38% |
| North East | 8 | 2 | 25% |
| North West | 33 | 8 | 24% |
| South East | 28 | 7 | 25% |
| South West | 21 | 5 | 24% |
| West Midlands | 22 | 7 | 32% |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 22 | 2 | 9% |
| Wales ² | 5 | 2 | 40% |
| Total | 212 | 52 | N/A |

¹ Responding bodies are listed at Annex B to this section of the report

² While the IFN survey covered England and Wales, NASACRE's survey covered England only as Wales has its own association of SACREs (WASACRE). WASACRE is considering a similar survey.

2) Analysis

Question 1: Each local authority in England and Wales is statutorily required to establish and support a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). How do you perceive the nature of the relationship between your local inter faith body and local SACRE(s) in terms of their respective roles and their engagement with each other?

45 (87%) respondents reported some level or relationship between their LIFO and either the local or county SACRE. This ranged from simple overlap of membership and/or occasional information sharing (25 LIFOs) through to significant engagement with some joint working (20 LIFOs). Many of these described the relationship between their LIFO and the SACRE as good, developing, complementary and mutually beneficial.

- “Good”/”Very good”/”A close working relationship”/”Very close relationship.”
- “[Our] relationships have always been good and supportive.”
- “We have had a good and positive relationship with [our city’s] SACRE.”
- “There is... a good and developing relationship between the two.”
- “We work closely with SACRE in consultation and development... there is good representation on the SACRE from the faith forum.”
- “As chair of both groups, my perception is that there is obviously a very close relationship between both!”

A number of factors were identified by these respondents as contributing to their good working relationship.

a) Shared membership

- “I was one of the first members of the IFG to sit on SACRE and was able to use my knowledge of local faith groups to find

others of different faiths to also be invited to attend over the years. The link between the two groups is through the IFG members who attend SACRE meetings regularly [and for over 10 years] and look for opportunities to work together, eg providing contacts of different faiths to go into schools. Or join together on projects...”

- “We consider ourselves to be mutually supportive of one another with cross-fertilisation of ideas resulting from members of different faith communities being involved in both groups.”

b) A good working relationship between external Officers involved with the LIFO and SACRE.

- “The Local Authority Community Development Officer with responsibility for engagement with faith communities attends the SACRE... [and also] provides the Secretariat for the [county inter faith structure]. The LA Inspector of RE and Citizenship who coordinates the SACRE has been to speak about the work of SACRE to the inter faith network. The two officers meet regularly to discuss issues.”
- “The administration of the bodies has been provided by the local authority Democratic Services and Partnership Department so this has allowed very close collaboration between the SACRE clear and the IFF clerk, and for a time both roles were undertaken by the same officer. This facilitated joint working, joint events and sharing of news.”

c) Involvement of RE Adviser and SACRE members with the LIFO’s work.

- “One of mutual support and cooperation – the RE Adviser and SACRE members regularly attend meetings and we are involved in a number of collaborative projects, eg Holocaust Memorial Day and a DVD on faith and beliefs.”

d) Formalised sharing of information:

- “A representative of the SACRE sits on the

Inter Faith Forum and reports back to both bodies. The minutes of the Inter Faith Forum are included in the SACRE agenda.”³

However 13 (25%) respondents, said there was no (3) or very little (10) relationship between their LIFO and the local SACRE.

- “[Relationship] non existent.”
- “There is no engagement between our Forum and any SACRE.”
- “There is no real engagement between the two organisations.”
- “The relationship is not developed at the moment.”
- “Distant. Apart from an exchange of emails, there has been little or not interaction to date.”
- “There is no real engagement between the two organisations. [We]... do school work, in RE and do host school visits to places of worship, but SACRE has not approached us, nor we SACRE.”
- “As chair of the inter faith group I have informal contact with a number of SACRE members from 3 or 4 faith communities, but we do not have a more formalised link. SACRE have approached the inter faith group for its help on a number of fronts and I feel I can approach SACRE/its members particularly over the ‘faiths fair’ which aims very specifically to involve schools. In the past, an ‘official’ approach to the County RE Adviser/SACRE for help with access to schools proved non-productive’.”
- “... [W]e did not get very far in arranging contacts with SACRE... they did seem to be one sided. [Our local inter faith

representative] had to read a lot of paperwork and travel... [as there was] no local meeting. He had concerns but did not get a chance to express them.”

- “[We have] concerns about the lack of communication with the local SACRE.”

Some reasons for difficulties were identified:

a) Geographical mismatch

- “There is very little contact. We are occasionally asked to see if we can help SACRE become more multi faith, but it is a county body whilst we only work [in one town] so there is something of a mismatch.”

b) Different purposes and types of body

- “[Ours is]... a spiritually based organisation... and none of our members are in fact representatives for their various groups. The group meets to share spiritual insights and to generate understanding and cohesion. SACRE is designed to be formally representative and, in that sense, is more political in its role and bureaucratic in operation. It is also more specific in its role.” [Respondent from a group which operates on a ‘non-representative’ basis].⁴
- “An inter faith body does not generally concern itself with RE, while a SACRE is a multi-faith body concentrated on single issue”. [Respondent from the West Midlands].

Question 2: Do any members of your local inter faith organisation also sit on your local SACRE? If yes, please indicate approximately how many and of what faith at the present time.

50 LIFOs responded to this question. Table 2 below gives a breakdown of responses.

³ The same process of inter faith body minute inclusion within the SACRE agenda was also reported by a Greater London borough at question 3.

⁴ However, this respondent went on in a later question to refer to some joint work which they were carrying out despite these problems. As they did not, however, do so in the present question, they are not reflected in the figures for this.

Table 2: LIFOs with members who also serve on their local SACRE

| Region | Number of LIFOs which responded affirmatively to this question | Total number of LIFO members in the region also on SACRE | Yes (no number given) | Number of groups with 1 member serving on both | Number of groups with 2 members serving on both | Number of groups with 3 members serving on both or more) | Don't know/no response |
|----------------------|--|--|-----------------------|--|---|--|------------------------|
| East | 3 | 10 | - | - | 1 | 2 | - |
| East Midlands | 3 | 6 | - | 1 | - | 2 | - |
| London | 10 | 25 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | - |
| North East | 2 | 7 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - |
| North West | 8 | 14 | - | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| South East | 5 | 10 | - | 2 | 1 | 2 | - |
| South West | 4 | 19 | - | - | 1 | 3 | - |
| West Midlands | 3 | 4 | - | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 2 | 5 | - | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Wales ⁵ | 1 | 3 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| Total | 41 | 103 | 1 | 11 | 10 | 18 | 1 |

10 respondents (19%) said that they had no members who were also members of their local SACRE. 41 respondents (79%) said their LIFO had members who also represented their faith on their local SACRE. Between them, they had a total of 103 members who were also representing their faith community on the SACRE. See table 3 overleaf.

Table 3 shows the spread of different faith backgrounds of LIFO members identified by respondents as also serving on the SACRE. It is important to stress that this is not a triangulated piece of research giving a full picture of faith membership of SACREs. Nor is it possible to analyse, based on data provided, exactly what factors may lie behind the pattern. One might, however, speculate that there is a higher crossover of faith members for smaller faith communities where a limited number of individuals find themselves serving on many different bodies – particularly in areas of the country where their communities' numbers are lowest. Other factors which may influence the pattern of cross membership could include the fact that for some faith communities the LIFO may be a source to which SACRE has looked for

assistance in finding a member whereas the SACRE's Christian and Jewish representatives may come through other routes (for example ecumenical structures, which do not have overlapping membership with the forum).

Question 3: Has your local inter faith organisation worked with one or more SACREs on particular projects?

17 LIFOs (33%) responded affirmatively to this question about joint working on particular projects. Table 4 overleaf shows the pattern of activities based on whether respondents indicated 'yes' or 'no' to the set project areas listed. For the purposes of this survey, 'jointly' is taken to mean that events are planned or executed together or the respondent has indicated significant input from LIFO members to a SACRE event or vice versa.

Some groups were not presently carrying out projects but indicated that they were planning these.

- "Members of [our] inter faith group will participate in the 6th form conference that SACRE is organising this summer."

⁵ Wales was not included in the questionnaires sent from NASACRE to SACREs.

Table 3: Faith or non-religious belief background of LIFO members also serving on local SACRE

| Faith background of LIFO members who also sit on SACRE | Ch | Mu | Hi | Je | Ba | Si | Bu | Other | Ja | Hu | Pag | Zo | No of LIFO members also serving on their local SACRE |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|----|----|-----|----|--|
| East | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | 10 |
| East Midlands | 4 | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | 6 |
| London | 3 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | | | 1 | 25 |
| North East | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 7 |
| North West | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | 14 |
| South East | 4 | 2 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | 10 |
| South West | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | | 19 |
| West Midlands | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 4 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 5 |
| Wales | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| Total | 27 | 21 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 103 |

Ba = Baha'i; Bu = Buddhist; Ch = Christian; Hi = Hindu; Hu = Humanist; Ja = Jain; Je = Jewish; Mu = Muslim; Pag = Pagan; Si = Sikh; Zo = Zoroastrian

Table 4: Activities described by LIFOs as carried out *jointly* between LIFOs and SACREs

| Joint activities | No of LIFOs carrying out this kind of joint activity |
|---|--|
| a) Providing faith community members to visit schools to support RE or collective worship | 14 |
| b) Helping arrange or host visits by pupils to local places of worship | 10 |
| c) Developing a local youth inter faith forum | 1 |
| d) Developing or providing information about different faiths for, eg your website or a local authority publication | 12 |
| e) A joint conference | 5 |
| f) Other | 7 |

- “We established a Youth SACRE [in our city] over two years ago and ran a large inter faith conference.”
- “A conference on the contribution of faith to sustainable life.”
- “[We] have provided a multi faith panel visit to a school sixth form (general studies/philosophy class) collaborating with a SACRE member who is head of the RE Department there.”
- “... the SACRE and [our Faith Forum] collaborated with a joint working group to organise an inter faith dialogue conference in 2007 for sixth formers. This year... [we]... will be holding joint events... on community cohesion.”
- “We established a... Youth SACRE over two years ago and ran a large inter faith conference.”
- Curriculum materials.
- Exhibitions, lectures, celebrations of faith.
- Showcasing of students’ work in RE.
- “The SACRE chair is an active inter faith forum Committee member and supports all IFF activities, as do the other two members. [We held an] IFF Inaugural Lecture... Lord Hameed was our Keynote Speaker and then the SACRE Chair gave a quick talk on the local context in [our London borough]. It worked very well.”
- [The inter faith forum] invited SACRE members to join it on its visit to the ‘Sacred’ exhibition at the British library. The e-lists for [the inter faith forum], SACRE and RE teachers have often been used to send news of events of common interest to all bodies.

As well as the activity options listed in the questionnaire, 7 respondents listed ‘other’ activities. These were:

- “Members of [our inter faith group] helped to choose suitable resources for the major religions which are held at a local school and can be loaned out to RE teachers.”
- “... We engaged with local RE teachers to put them in touch with the local Jewish and Islamic faith communities so that they could work together to develop resources which can be used when the teachers bring classes along on a school visit to the place of worship.”
- “Working relationship with SACRE through partnerships.”
- “Developing a promotional video to explain the new... RE agreed syllabus to parents, teachers and local communities.”
- Holocaust Memorial Day activities.
- “... a biennial schools event celebrating religious and cultural diversity in [our authority]”.
- In Service Training – INSET.
- “SACRE... had a display stall at our One World Week event in 2007 and we have a guest speaker from SACRE coming to speak at our meeting [later this year] on ‘Spiritual Development’.”
- “Advocating for a more inclusive and reflective RE syllabus in schools.”
- “Regular junior inter faith meetings, normally with senior students. Recently we have run a cross-phase event with pupils from infant, junior and senior schools.”

In a few cases respondents said that either a) they were aware of their local SACRE’s involvement in a particular area of work, listed in the multiple choice answers provided in the questionnaire, but that the SACRE was not working together with the LIFO on it; or b) the LIFO was working in this area but on its

Table 5

| Age range | 5–12 | 13–19 | 19–30 | 5–30 | Other |
|-----------------------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Number of Respondents | 8 | 12 | 0 | 8 | 6 |

own or in partnership with a body other than the SACRE.

a) Providing faith community members to visit schools to support RE or Collective Worship

- “[Our city’s] Faith Leaders Group has developed a group of people from each of the six major faith communities who are able to go into schools when requested. This was not developed with SACRE but has been done in cooperation with the new agreed RE syllabus.”
- “[We have] done this but independently of SACRE”
- “We already provide this directly to schools, through our partnership with the Religious Studies Resource Centre at [a] school [in the city].”

b) A local youth inter faith forum

- “This is in the process of being set up by local SACRE but to date, as far as I am aware, [our local inter faith council] has not been actively involved.”
- “The Faith Forum has developed [a local youth inter faith forum] but SACRE were not involved. It was done through [the authority’s] Youth Service and SACRE is slow in getting in on the act...”
- “We are having a youth inter faith forum [shortly] – but not in direct collaboration with SACRE.”
- “[We] have a project in progress, directly between our inter faith council, youth groups and young adults/leaders, but this does not involve SACREs”.

Question 4: If your local inter faith organisation has worked with one or more SACREs on particular projects, what has been the age range of young people involved in these projects?

Overall there were 31 responses to this question. Table 5 shows the responses.

Comments relating to the ‘other’ category were varied.

- “Our joint work with SACREs has not been specifically directed at any age groups.”
- “[Our local inter faith group] has not really focused on young people directly.”

Some also indicated that their work involved the “over 50s” or the “30 to 60” age range. It was not clear to what sort of contexts they were referring.

Question 5: What issues, if any, have emerged from such projects, or more generally from any overlap of activity or shared concern?

15 LIFOs responded to this question. Perhaps unsurprisingly, capacity and resource issues topped the list of issues which had emerged from joint project working (or lack of it).

Capacity and funding

- “It seems all our capacities are limited due to resource pressure (eg funding, people’s time).”
- Anything to do with funding proves difficult for both SACRE and IFF – there is a problem with i) Cinderella status and ii) the wariness of the secular towards faith in the public sphere. Neither body receive large sums of money (such as has been

provided... for Preventing Violent Extremism) and yet RE and Inter Faith Groups are the ones who have been in the business of inter faith relations for many years...”

- “Organising a joint bank account [for an FCCBF funded joint local inter faith group/SACRE project] was extremely time consuming – it would have been a lot easier if [it was accepted that] local authorities could be used as ‘honest brokers’ in the process – the strict demarcation between public/local authority spending and third sector which the CDF adheres to was not helpful in that context and does not encourage local authorities to get into creative partnership working with faith communities.”
- “More local authority support would have been helpful. Little financial support has been forthcoming and [our city] no longer has an RE Adviser...”
- “The need to have an agreed and established protocol (including payment) around visitors to schools and visits by schools to places of worship.”
- “The need for central government support for more locally supported initiatives, as opposed to an imposed centralised approach.”
- Responding to Q5 and Q6, “This [joint working] requires a great deal of time, effort and planning and knowledge and understanding of RE in the school curriculum. All IFCG executive members are volunteers with very little time to spare. We have no paid staff and hardly any funds. We do have expertise in RE within the IFCG as the current Secretary is a retired RE adviser. It is difficult to see how we could find the ‘man hours’ to plan and run successful projects with schools ourselves but could assist a dynamic RE consultant if he/she was available to take this on for one of the local SACREs. I understand the adviser support for RE is

very limited in both [our local authority] and [our county council].”

Some reflections were offered on the status of RE and on staff and student pastoral needs.

- “Concern at the possibility of RE being watered down as a result of the new Government guidance (and of SACRE independence being weakened).”
- “Need for pastoral support to students and staff. [We are] piloting ‘faith friends’ (chaplaincy) in a [local secondary school].”

One respondent spoke of: “The difficulty of getting serious action and a sense of progress from committee and local authority staff.”

Another spoke of: “Enthusiasm and mutual awareness that we are working in the same broad field with the possibility of further co-operation...”

Question 6: Have you any comments on your local inter faith organisation’s experiences of working jointly or achieving a satisfactory mode of communication and mutual awareness with the local SACRE(s)?

As in response to previous questions, many of the 32 respondents stressed positive experiences of joint working were strongly linked to shared membership. Typical were the following comments.

- “[Successful collaboration] is facilitated by the fact that some people are involved in both the SACRE and the inter faith group.”
- “Because of the number of people who have membership of both organisations, there have been no problems of communication and mutual awareness.”
- “Communication and mutual awareness is inevitably fostered by the presence of SACRE members on [the] inter faith network. One of the members has given a presentation about SACRE to [the] inter faith network [and] SACRE members are

[also] kept up to date.”

- “We receive news of inter faith and SACRE work from [a local inter faith group member] who is [also] a SACRE member and a member of another inter faith group.”
- “In [a London Borough] there is a key person who is a full time ‘faith link coordinator’ who produces a quarterly publication on faith in the borough which is an excellent conduit of inter faith information.”
- “We should always keep each other informed.”
- “We have benefited from links on our respective websites and through the contact and sharing of expertise of group members.”

At the same time, the comment was offered by several people that just being in good communication was not enough.

- “There is a satisfactory mode of communication and mutual awareness of both but... more could be done in partnership.”
- “Communication is good, however, more partnership work needs to be explored.”
- “I think on the whole this has been satisfactory in many ways, but much less so when action and active programming is involved.”
- “The mode of communication works (e-mail) – the problem is that communications do not lead to the desired outcomes (ie mutual collaboration).”
- “Informal communication works well enough for mutual consultation, but my request for specific help from SACRE regarding our faiths fair produced no result... The issue of work overload is very real.”

Capacity issues and overload were again cited.

- “In developing the strategy of acting as the city’s inter faith hub, [our inter faith council] must at some time enter into partnership with the [city’s] SACRE. Up until now, pressure of business across a range of different issues has not allowed [our council of faiths] to develop the interest in RE issues [with our local SACRE] that perhaps we ought.”
- “[Joint working] requires a great deal of time, effort and planning and knowledge and understanding of RE in the school curriculum. All [our inter faith] executive members are volunteers with very little time to spare. We have no paid staff and hardly any funds.”
- “Lack of capacity prevents us doing more.”

So too were problems of communication across professional boundaries and between bodies with different history and perceived willingness to engage.

- “The professional world of RE (eg language/jargon, attitudes/perspective) can be quite different from the grassroots views of church/faith community members. We are fortunate in having RE representatives on the SACRE, who can explain themselves clearly without being patronising, and very well educated lay members of religions on the inter faith forum.”
- “Partly because SACREs have been around for longer than the faith forum, and representation is already established, there are inevitable development issues where the established [local SACRE] with a fixed remit does not necessarily want to be involved in another group’s work. We are getting there – slowly!”
- “[We hope that] there is sufficient in year 4/5 [of the five yearly process of the Local Agreed Syllabus review]... that for the next Syllabus Review the SACRE will have more

resources to work with, which might support consultation with the Inter Faith Forum and faith communities in addition to the consultation with schools... but this might demand a lot of extra time for explanation and discussion as many grassroots members of faith communities have not idea about Agreed Syllabuses for RE.”

- Our [county] SACRE does not seem to engage in ‘projects’ – so practical cooperation is a non-starter.
- “Our [inter faith organisation] did not get very far in arranging contacts with SACRE and they did seem very one sided. Our person had to travel [some distance to attend meetings]; [there as] no local meeting. He had concerns but did not get chance to express them.”
- “It was apparently impossible for all the faiths to know who their representative on SACRE was because of the Data Protection Act.”

And also sustaining a relationship beyond work on the Agreed Syllabus.

- “The challenge will... be to ensure a creative ongoing relationship now that the major task of developing the RE Agreed Syllabus has been completed.”

And a heartfelt appreciation of joint working with, and for, young people and a desire to build on that.

- “A clear message that young people have a heart for their faith and are determined to engage with others of faith or none.”
- “We would like more and more opportunities for linking with SACRE with our work with young people.”

One or two respondents simply restated that there was no engagement between their body and SACRE.

Question 7: What is your perception of how your local authority understands the respective roles of your local inter faith organisation and your SACRE?

There were 32 responses to this question.

Some respondents thought that their local authority understood well the respective roles of both the local inter faith organisation and the SACRE. Typical were the following comments.

- “[Our local authority]’s Community Development Department are very supportive of our [local inter faith network] and fully aware of the need of [this] to work with SACRE. We have plans to do that in the next two years.”
- “The local council understands well the roles of both and supports both.”
- “Those that need [to understand] do!”
- “We are fortunate that the local authority now funds [our local inter faith group] (through building cohesion themed funding), as well as SACRE, through education funding – although this can sometimes result in problems when dealing with different departments In the main the local authority understands the respective roles.”
- “Both organisations are held in high regard by the local authority...”
- “Reasonable understanding across services with a relevance for faith.”
- “I think the local authority are finally seeing the need to recognise and support both bodies.”

Others were not so sanguine.

- “This is only just starting to be addressed.”
- “This is unclear, because we have no direct link with them. Therefore it is difficult to

assess how LAs and SACREs perceive the importance of inter faith involvement, as opposed to that of the individual faith representation. Anecdotal comment suggests that there is little interest or enthusiasm, among the general membership of SACREs, regarding involving inter faith in its own right.”

- It is under-explored.
- “We do not know what either tier [of our two tier local authority] thinks about the respective roles of IF and SACRE.”
- “I do not think there is a clear understanding.”
- “Little understanding of the potential for inter faith cooperation.”
- “It isn’t bothered!”
- “I feel that they are very naïve and do not understand the role we have.”
- “It probably doesn’t at all. I have no evidence of it doing so.”

Some respondents commented specifically on how the authority saw the roles of the two different types of body and/or related to them.

- “SACRE is more limited to schools work and experiences. Faith Forum is broader.”
- “An LA is a collection of many people. The LA does not have a view apart from the few individuals we work with!”
- “The County Council relate to SACRE, the Borough Council relates to [our inter faith forum] – and there is very little overlap.”
- “[Our] county council relates to the SACRE and the Borough Council relates to [our] inter faith forum... there is very little overlap.”
- “The relevant SACRE would be that for [the

County] and we do not know how the... County Council or [our] District Council... views the InterFaith role.”

- “Very patchy! There has recently been increased representation from Elected Members on SACRE and plans to disseminate information to all Elected Members on the role of SACRE. The SACRE Development Plan has an emphasis on Community Cohesion and improving awareness about inter faith groups and activity. This will also benefit the local authority and hopefully contribute to improving ‘religious literacy’ for LA officers and Members as well as ‘civic literacy’ for faith communities.”
- “The LA does see the forums as having an education role and is beginning to see the organisations as having a role in community cohesion. [It sees] SACRE as being purely associated with RE.”
- “It usually seems to be a constant struggle to educate people about the role of these bodies...”
- “[Our local authority] support our Inter Faith Group by placing a representative on our committee. I understand they also support SACRE. No direct contact with [our] county council.”
- “Not bad, though probably the level of SACRE focus with the LA is insufficient as yet for the vitality of the potential relationship to dawn. Some might say that the SACRE had been so Christian dominated in the past it had become complacent and unused to challenge.”
- “The Authority has worked with the [local inter faith organisation] on a... Charter (about our united town)... very successfully.”

And a few commented specifically on local authority awareness of one or other type of body and their treatment of this.

- “As the local authority is minimally aware of [our forum] in spite of inviting... it to be set up I think their [understanding would] be vague!”
- “Our perception is that [our local authority] has little awareness nor interest in or support for our inter faith work unless there is a directive from central government which may instigate a very fleeting, token interest.”
- “... The local authority does not get involved in the [work of the] inter faith group, although they are supportive on the occasions we have contacted them.”
- “Many local authority departments... have little clear understanding of the statutory role of SACRE.”
- “There is little awareness of SACRE within some parts of our local authority. For example [it] has been awarded some PVE money from the Home Office. At today’s meeting of the group which is allocating the PVE money only 4 Council officers out of 10 were aware of the existence of SACRE or its purpose.”
- “Our local authority supports the SACRE with a budget.”
- “My impression is that many SACREs across the country have a problem of getting their local authority Education Departments to properly resource their work for RE.”

In areas where there was more than one inter faith or multi faith local organisation, SACRE sometimes seemed to have a closer working relationship with one than the other.

- “In [our city] the chairmanship of SACRE is a political appointment and the present Chair has close friends on the senior group of the City’s progressive partnership which has assured it unprecedented support. [Our inter faith body] has been largely ignored in favour of [the City’s] Faith

Leaders Group by the Council lead on Equalities, which is another reason why co-operation is not as proactive as it might be.”

- “The local authority had been interested in using [our inter faith group] as a vehicle with consulting with local faith groups, but [we] did not feel this was appropriate and a separate Council of Faiths has been established. There is no current official link [between us] and the local authority.”
- “I don’t think the LA considers the inter faith group at all – but in fairness we are not a strong group. The LA has recently set up an Interfaith Partnership as a route for faith groups to deal with official bodies. The role of the Interfaith Group continues to be about matters of faith.”

A small number of respondents used this question to offer more general reflections on local authorities’ perceptions of and support for the two different types of body but also for faith and inter faith issues more generally.

- “At one level [our] City Council is very supportive of faith based organisations. However, understanding of the organisations, the various faith communities and their structures and the value which they bring to life in the city, tends to be patchy.”
- “The local authority does not do ‘faith’ very well in general.”
- “I’m not convinced that the local authority pays much more than lip-service to the ideals involved.”
- “Some evidence of not wishing to engage with faith and a reluctance to move away from a limited secular stance, particularly from those of limited faith knowledge and experience.”

Question 8: Can you, as a local inter faith body, provide examples of good practice in joint working with your local SACRE which you think could usefully be shared more widely?

8 respondents (15%) gave specific examples of good practice reflecting joint work with SACRE that they thought could usefully be shared more widely.

- “The ‘Faith Guides’ scheme of the Faith to Encounter Programme [with which Birmingham Council of Faiths is involved] has involved working with Birmingham SACRE and mutual training of personnel.” (Birmingham Council of Faiths)
- “The obvious example is the development of the RE Agreed Syllabus. We believe this to have been a nationally important development, only possible through good and strong local links based on trust.” (Birmingham Faith Leaders’ Group)
- “Production of a CD Photopack deliberately focusing upon traditions for which there is a lack of authentic, high quality educational resources nationally. The packs also focus upon religious denominations which have significant communities in Enfield eg Nanak Darbar North London, St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, and the Suleymaniye Mosque and UK Turkish Cultural Centre for schools.” (Enfield Faith Forum)
- “Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and their local SACRE worked together to produce a DVD. This work has been used by HMI as exemplars of good practice in schools.” (Hillingdon Inter Faith Network)
- “A voluntary organisation called Global Arts in Kingston won an FCCBF⁶ grant to produce a beautiful illuminated polyptych tapestry representing faith symbols from four faiths in Kingston. Global Arts has

produced other creative fusion projects between cultures and religions, particularly with young people. It is intended if there is sufficient resource to develop this as a travelling educational resource for schools, [such as] for curricular RE or art lessons...”

- “Our youth SACRE and a large inter faith conference on the theme of identity.” (Liverpool Community Spirit)
- “A visit to the mosque was arranged with SACRE and was very informative for everyone. A power point presentation was given on Islam [to] which SACRE members were invited. This was very informative for all viewers.” (Mid Essex Interfaith Forum)
- “Faith Centre and Chaplaincy initiatives.” (Building Bridges in Burnley)
- “Plymouth SACRE has supported the establishment of Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity and works closely with it. This is a very significant model that can be used in every LA. There need to be places where resources can be found and, most importantly where people can meet and where the real work of dialogue can take place.” (Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity)
- “A leaflet about visits and visitors.” (Suffolk Inter Faith Resource)

A few respondents referred back to responses to earlier questions to highlight good practice.

Question 9: Do you have any suggestions for projects (other than any you have mentioned in your response to Q8 as examples of your local good practice) where local inter faith bodies and SACREs might fruitfully work together to increase inter faith understanding and community cohesion?

⁶ Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund of the Department for Communities and Local Government. This grant scheme was administered by CDF.

Respondents to this question offered a range of suggestions.

- “Promoting awareness, knowledge and understanding of what is taught in RE and what collective worship is and what schools do.”
- “Educating young people about global issues such as climate change, fairtrade and spiritual practice.”
- “A joint publication on places to visit and people to invite to schools.”
- “A publication ‘Don’t tell us what upsets us!’ countering many of the myths about what can and cannot be done in school because of assumed religious sensibilities.”
- “Building the capacity of faith groups to host schools.”
- “Building the capacity of faith groups to provide locally based ‘educators’ or ‘guides’ to their particular religion.”
- “Development of the county’s RE syllabus to include... scope for inter faith group members to lead assemblies in schools.”
- “Dialogue between RE teachers and IFG members on, eg, how to engage militant atheism...”
- “Using educational sessions aimed at the general public.”
- “Each being a ‘critical friend’ of the other, so as to challenge each other’s assumptions.”
- “Agreed Syllabus review/roadshow.”
- “Promoting and organising exhibitions of artwork; competitions of written/spoken word and drama on religious themes.”
- “Promoting visits of faith schools to their counterparts and possible twinning.”
- “... [The local inter faith group] could be encouraged to participate in projects with local schools, eg sixth form conferences/RE fairs or exhibitions...”
- “To have access to schools and colleges to offer the services of [our local inter faith network], and to invite students to take part in inter faith activities such as [our] Garden Project and other planned projects.”
- “[Local inter faith bodies and SACREs] could act as a more effective consultation mechanism for services wanting to find out views of different faith groups.”
- “We could undertake more joint projects in schools to support the RE Syllabus as not all secondary schools in [our local authority area] are compliant with the RE Syllabus. We could do more talks on the importance of inter faith dialogue, to help share universal messages of greater understanding (for different faith traditions and beliefs), tolerance and respect.”
- “Our local inter faith body and local SACRE could give talks on Faith Literacy together.”
- “[Our local] SACRE could get more involved and support [our] inter faith forum’s Question Time panels in secondary schools”
- “More talks and seminars on different religions and more visits to different places of worship.”
- “Both organisations being part of the Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum.”
- “Development of the county’s RE syllabus, to include inter faith issues; for example, how to implement locally the Millennium Pledge made by the leaders of the main faiths in January 2000.”
- “Providing inter faith (as distinct from

single faith or even denominational) inputs to schools on controversial issues like genetic engineering and the sanctity of life.”

- “Discussion of key issues identified by either group, and actions deriving from such discussions...”
- “To develop a strong national voice and lobby for SACREs to be given proper support to carry out the vital tasks and responsibilities they have been given, eg resources to monitor the effectiveness of RE teaching in our schools and to hold those schools properly accountable to the legal and moral obligations to provide excellent RE for their pupils/communities...”

Question 10: A national ‘Inter Faith Week’ is in planning for November 2009. Do you have any suggestions for joint events or projects which might be developed by local inter faith organisations with their local SACREs as part of the Week?

Among the responses were 5 from LIFOs already planning events with their local SACRE.

- “We will be working with SACRE in development of a conference at the [nearby University] on the contribution of faith to sustainable life.”
- “We will begin to look at activities which might be initiated during that week, either ourselves or jointly with other inter faith bodies, including SACRE.” (a faith leaders’ group)
- “We are just working [on inter faith week] with the SACRE to... launch a potential initiative. Discussions are in an early stage.”
- “We are in the process of planning events at the moment but the two front runners are a joint faith celebration and... an RE Festival.”

- “... [We] are approaching SACRE and a local interfaith education network to initiate at least one joint activity this November.”

Other respondents suggested possible joint Inter Faith Week events.

- “... [A] play in which young people who share the ideals of inter faith can come together and take charge of the project and carry out the project themselves with support from people who have professional knowledge of theatre work.”
- “Making a Film on *What My Faith Means to Me* – young people [can] interview each other on the subject.”
- “Produce a piece of shared art work to represent local faiths.”
- “Facilitate visits to different places of worship and visits to nature parks by pupils to explore common interests in our natural environment.”

One organisation made the point that their SACRE had already put effort into a sixth form conference in the summer and therefore it was unlikely that they would want to consider another big event in the autumn (or have the budget for it), but they would like to work together towards next year should there be another inter faith week then. This point, although positive, suggested funding issues, mentioned at various points in responses to several questions.

3) Conclusions

A wide range of experiences and reflections was captured by the research.

LIFO's experiences of working with SACREs varied enormously, from simple overlap of membership and/or occasional information sharing through to significant engagement with some joint working. Likewise their evaluation of the relationship ran from 'non-existent', through 'patchy', to 'promising and developing', to 'excellent'. What is important is to draw out some of the reasons for the varieties of experience, to identify some of the key obstacles to joint working and to lift out some of the factors which foster effective joint working rooted in a clear understanding of their respective roles by LIFOs, SACREs, local authorities and others.

It should, of course, be emphasised that LIFOs and SACREs have their own distinctive roles and patterns of work. There will be areas where joint working is desirable and areas where it would not be appropriate or necessary.

Factors identified as detrimental to an effective working relationship

- Little or no overlap of membership.
- Poor information sharing.
- Limited capacity on the part of LIFO to engage due to lack of paid staff and low funding and on the part of SACRE to be able to consult or work jointly with LIFO as fully as desirable.
- Lack of clarity/misunderstanding about roles and areas of joint work on the part of the bodies themselves and of the local authority.
- Complexity of RE and Agreed Syllabus issues and distance between the professional world of RE and the grassroots of faith communities.
- Lack of awareness and engagement on the

part of the local authority with one or both bodies.

- Failure (in a limited number of cases) of a SACRE to respond to requests for assistance from LIFOs.
- Geographical mismatch – for example, a LIFO with a focus on one city or town not knowing how to connect with a county SACRE and vice versa.
- Failure of a SACRE to consult the LIFO in their area, or vice versa, on an area of likely joint interest such as development of an inter faith forum.
- Some SACREs not seeing significance of 'inter faith' work and inter faith organisations.

Factors affecting ability to do joint projects in areas of common concern

- Capacity to take on projects – particularly joint ones which may need extra time to set up and manage.
- Difficulty of getting funding – 'Cinderella status' of both SACREs and LIFOs in many local authorities.
- Complex to establish a joint bank account needed for some sorts of application where local authority is not allowed to apply on behalf of both bodies.
- General lack of enthusiasm – or even wariness – within some local authorities about faith issues across the board.

Factors which were identified as contributing to a good working relationship

- Shared membership with mutual reporting back.
- Careful systems for sharing information, including:
 - mutual website links
 - shared e-lists including events of interest

to both bodies and also RE teachers

- where appropriate, the inter faith organisation's minutes being on the SACRE agenda.

- Clarity about roles and areas of joint work on the part of the bodies themselves and of the local authority.
- Taking care to explain different working assumptions/methodologies/agendas.
- Close working engagement between local authority staff working with the two types of body.
- A local authority with a clear sense of the roles of the two types of body and working well with both and adequate staff time devoted to engaging with them and sharing information.
- Both bodies working together in context of some other forum.
- Speakers from SACRE visiting the LIFO and vice versa.

Good practice to build on and ideas for future work

Detailed examples of current good practice and possible future projects can be found in the responses to a number of the questions and are not repeated in detail here.

- Working together to ensure good input of faith groups to RE and Collective Worship in Schools.
- Joint work on resources for schools.
- Arranging school visits to places of worship and helping train/support faith groups to host these.
- Engaging well over development and Review of the Agreed Syllabus.
- Work together on events such as HMD and Inter Faith Week.

- Development of youth SACREs or youth inter faith forums.

Survey analysis by Harriet Crabtree and Stella Opoku-Owusu

Appendix A: Local inter faith organisation questionnaire on working with SACREs

1. Each local authority in England and Wales is statutorily required to establish and support a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). How do you perceive the nature of the relationship between your local inter faith body and local SACRE(s) in terms of their respective roles and their engagement with each other?
2. Do any members of your local inter faith organisation also sit on your local SACRE?
 - a) No
 - b) Yes

If yes, please indicate approximately how many and of what faith at the present time.

3. Has your local inter faith organisation worked with one or more SACREs on particular projects? Please tick any that apply and add any further information which you would like to provide.
 - a) Providing faith community members to visit schools to support religious education or collective worship
 - b) Helping arrange / host visits by pupils to local places of worship
 - c) Developing a local youth inter faith forum

- d) Developing / providing information about different faiths for, eg, your website or a local authority publication
 - e) A joint conference
 - f) Other (please describe)
4. If your local inter faith organisation has worked with one or more SACREs on particular projects, what has been the age range of young people involved in these projects?
- a) 5-12
 - b) 13-18
 - c) 19-30
 - d) All of these age ranges
 - e) Other: please describe
5. What issues, if any, have emerged from such projects, or more generally from any overlap of activity or shared concern?
6. Have you any comments on your local inter faith organisation's experiences of working jointly or achieving a satisfactory mode of communication and mutual awareness with the local SACRE(s)?
7. What is your perception of how your local authority understands the respective roles of your local inter faith organisation and your SACRE?
8. Can you, as a local inter faith body, provide examples of good practice in joint working with your local SACRE which you think could usefully be shared more widely?
9. Do you have any suggestions for projects (other than any you have mentioned in your response to Q8 as examples of your local good practice) where local inter faith bodies and SACREs might fruitfully work together to increase inter faith understanding and community cohesion?
10. A national 'Inter Faith Week' is in planning for November 2009 (for which dates are due to be announced shortly). Do you have any suggestions for joint events or projects which might be developed by local inter faith organisations with their local SACREs as part of the Week?

Appendix B: List of local inter faith organisations that responded to the survey

Altrincham Inter Faith Group
 Bath Interfaith Group
 Birmingham Council of Faiths
 Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group
 Blackpool Faith Forum
 Bolton Interfaith Council
 Bradford District Faiths Forum
 Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group
 Buckinghamshire Forum of Faiths
 Building Bridges in Burnley
 Burton upon Trent Inter Faith Network
 Clapham and Stockwell Faith Forum
 County Durham Faiths Network
 Coventry Multi-Faith Forum
 Crawley Interfaith Network
 Devon Faiths Forum
 Doncaster Interfaith
 Dudley Borough Interfaith Network
 Enfield Faith Forum
 Faiths Together in Croydon
 Forum of Faiths Kensington and Chelsea
 Harrow Inter Faith Council
 Hastings and District Interfaith Forum
 Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
 Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)
 Islington Faiths Forum
 Kingston Inter-Faith Forum
 Liverpool Community Spirit
 Mid Essex Interfaith Forum
 Muslim-Christian Forum (Bury)
 Newcastle Council of Faiths
 Northampton Inter Faith Forum
 North London Interfaith
 North Wales All Faith Leaders' Gathering
 Norwich InterFaith Link
 Nottingham Inter Faith Council

Plymouth Interfaith Group
Reading Faith Forum
South London Inter Faith Group
South Shropshire Inter Faith Forum
Stockport Inter-Faith Network
Stratford Interfaith Forum
Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource
Swindon Inter Faith Group
Totnes and District Inter Faith Forum
Valleys Faith Forum
Warrington Council of Faiths
Watford Inter Faith Association
Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group
Wisbech Interfaith Forum
Wycombe Sharing of Faiths

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