

# Shaping our Shared Society: The Key Role of Local Inter Faith Organisations



Report on the 2010 National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK



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Report on the National Meeting of  
the Inter Faith Network for the UK

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# Foreword

This report records the proceedings of the 2010 National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK.

Growing numbers of inter faith organisations are working at local level to develop good inter faith relations and to encourage cooperation on social issues: together helping shape our shared society.

The meeting offered a chance to hear about how these local inter faith organisations are developing their work and about the challenges they are facing and the opportunities they see ahead – as well as to consider the changing landscape for local inter faith work and some of the key issues helping shape this. It was also a chance to explore the role that national faith communities, national and regional inter faith and educational bodies play in helping support work to promote inter faith understanding and cooperation in local communities.

The report records the day's sharing of ideas and 'know-how', its exploration of challenges and the reminder – were any needed – of the great gifts which mutual respect and practical cooperation bring.

We hope that the report will be a valuable resource for all working on the crucial task of promoting and deepening good inter faith relations in local communities in our diverse but United Kingdom.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Harriet Crabtree". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

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



# Key points from the day

The list is not exhaustive but highlights points made which may be helpful in considering the importance and development of local inter faith work. These are not conclusions agreed by the meeting as a whole, but draw on reflections offered in the course of the day's wide ranging presentations and discussions.

## **The importance of local inter faith organisations**

- 1 Developing and strengthening good inter faith relations is a key task for our times.
- 2 Inter faith understanding and cooperation are vital in all communities, regardless of their religious diversity or social mix.
- 3 There has been an astonishing growth in local inter faith activity across the last twenty years – especially in the last five years. Numbers of multi-faith local inter faith bodies have tripled since 2000 to over 250.
- 4 Local inter faith organisations contribute powerfully to greater understanding and cooperation between people of different faith communities in their areas by creating opportunities for learning, interaction and engagement and laying a groundwork of trust which can enable a timely and united response if tensions or difficulties arise.
- 5 Local inter faith organisations form a tremendously important category of member bodies of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. Through its framework their connection with the national faith communities, national and regional inter faith bodies and academic and educational bodies, is strengthened and mutual learning facilitated.

- 6 The 'Big Society' is about making sure that local communities, local neighbourhoods and local groups, including faith groups, can play an active part in society and feel empowered to make a real contribution to it. Inter faith dialogue and action at the local level links straight into the agenda for the 'Big Society' that the Government is hoping to build.

## **Some ways that local inter faith organisations contribute to their local areas**

- 7 Increasing awareness about different faiths, for example through holding exhibitions and talks and arranging programmes in partnership with local institutions of higher and further education, schools and SACREs.
- 8 Providing advice and information on faith related issues and signposting the resources of local faith communities to local authorities, local strategic partnerships, police and other agencies.
- 9 Developing faith-based community projects to tackle local issues from environment to crime.
- 10 Offering moral support to local faith groups when international incidents occur or when those groups feel under pressure in the UK, for example because of misinformation and prejudice or because of particular campaigns or activities by bodies such as the British National Party or the English Defence League.
- 11 Responding to particular issues, such as racism and the experiences of isolation of particular communities (particularly in rural areas), and offering support and a sense of safety, involvement and welcome.



- 12 Spreading understanding and dispelling ignorance about communities through talks, schools programmes and measures such as encouraging faith groups to hold open-door days at their places of worship so that people can visit and learn about the communities.
- 13 Arranging peace walks and faith trails to visit different faiths' places of worship – an excellent example of 'learning on the move' and a way to demonstrate good relations to the wider community.
- 14 Encouraging friendship through social events, including music and sharing meals together.
- 15 Reaching out to chaplaincies in hospitals, prisons, colleges, universities and hospices.
- 16 Providing religious awareness training or 'religious literacy training':
  - Demand locally for training in religious awareness has been growing in recent years as people increasingly find themselves working with colleagues of different faiths and become aware of the need to learn about different cultures than their own. A number of local inter faith groups are providing this training and thus aiding inter faith understanding in their areas.
  - In training for religious literacy and inter faith understanding it is important to have tutors and presenters who embody what they are talking about: 'text people rather than text books'. Authenticity in this context is vital, with presenters having knowledge of their own faith tradition – including the diversity within it.
  - Training should be kept simple with the aim of giving people a basic grounding in different faiths. It is important to ask questions. There are no stupid questions – just questions to which people feel the need for answers.
- Texts are important too. People want to have simple booklets they can take away, giving them a gentle introduction to different faiths and an aide memoire of their training.
- 'Modelling' diversity is important. It is helpful to use workshops to get people to see interaction between the different faiths, working together as a team.

### Developing the work

- 17 We need to ensure that we are working at the pace of those we wish to engage with us. If we are not, then the debate and the dialogue will not progress.
- 18 We still have to make more effort to reach the people who are not yet with us. We are often talking to people we already know and with whom we are friends, or at least are aware, but there remain large numbers of people who have no religious faith, or have faith but are suspicious of inter faith engagement. We should not sit down and be content with our achievements so far. We have to re-double our efforts to reach these people.
- 19 It is good to seek, and act on, active feedback on activities.
- 20 It is very often when we tackle challenges that we develop interactive and lively programmes. It is when people start being creative in the face of difficulties that programmes are produced that draw people in, hold their attention and get their commitment.
- 21 Dialogue between women at local level is important. It can enable women to talk about their issues and discuss them as openly as possible.
- 22 Some local inter faith bodies feel caught

between two models – the model of the professionalised local voluntary body and, on the other hand, an old-style, loose voluntary association.

23 Outreach programmes by local places of worship play an important part in developing inter faith understanding among school pupils and students but also adults. Providing learning opportunities for clergy of other faiths and INSET training for teachers of other faiths is also important.

24 It is well and good to be creative in organising programmes around an organisation's aims and objectives, but it is also important in every case for the designated worker handling the programme to be passionate about it and to value the people and the communities with which they work.

25 Regional link meetings in England for local inter faith groups arranged by IFN and Regional Faith Forums are a very helpful way to learn what other groups in the region are doing, as well as to get both a regional and national perspective and discuss issues of common concern.

26 In Scotland, the Scottish Government is supporting the post of a worker who is on secondment from the Scottish Inter Faith Council to support the development of local inter faith groups – including in rural communities.

#### **Local authorities and local inter faith work**

27 Local authorities can play a significant role in supporting and encouraging good inter faith relations including through helping to support an existing local inter faith body (or even helping to set one up).

28 Local authorities have become more aware of the importance of inter faith issues, partly through greater recognition of the positive contribution which faith groups can and do make, singly and

together, to their local areas, as well as increased recognition of the importance of strengthening community cohesion, and of tackling extremist ideologies. The inclusion in the Equality Act of religion and belief as a strand has also had an impact, as has the prompt, through legislation, for local authorities to consult widely with their local communities.

29 Local inter faith bodies and local authorities have many concerns in common and there is potential for fruitful cooperation. The challenge is for them to find ways to work well together – to work out the partnership in ways where each respects the integrity of the other and their overlapping, but sometimes differing, priorities,

#### **Aims and patterns of involvement**

30 Local inter faith organisations come into being for a range of reasons – from developing mutual understanding and support and friendship to promoting social inclusion and community cohesion and the wellbeing of the local community. Likewise, they operate in a range of different ways and there is no fixed 'correct' model.

31 Although most local inter faith organisations are not very formal when they begin, there is value in developing a full constitution and guidelines. (One of the IFN membership criteria for local inter faith organisations is that they have a constitution, since this makes it evident that the organisation will have a continuing life and makes it more visible to the outside world.)

32 It is important to remember the diversity within communities as well as between them. Where this diversity takes the form of strong disagreements, these internal cohesion problems need tackling for a community to be able to engage well with other faith communities or to play a strong civic role.

- 33 Approaches to membership may change over time. First and foremost an organisation needs to decide on its aims. For instance, if the aim is dialogue on topics of mutual interest then the organisation may only need a simple constitution with membership open to all.
- 34 There can be tensions between the desire, as a local inter faith group, to be as inclusive as possible and, at the same time, to deal with the fact that some of the people or groups involved may give an indication that they will leave the table if others come to it who they do not recognise as bona fide faith groups.
- 35 Where bodies are 'representative' in nature, issues may arise in terms of who is included and who is able to be representative of whom. It is important to discuss these issues openly. These may include questions such as whether organisations such as New Religious Movements and sectarian bodies of faith communities should be involved.
- 36 IFN's membership criteria for local inter faith organisations require that an organisation is "directed, like the Network, primarily at relationships between mainstream religious groups". However, IFN does not lay down a fixed pattern for local groups. So long as they meet the criterion outlined, they may choose to involve any other groups if they so wish.
- 37 Some local inter faith organisations may choose to make adjustments to their membership in response to requests from their local authorities. However, it is very important that an organisation decides for itself whether it wants to adjust its membership policy, as faith communities need to retain 'ownership' of this. In this context, it may be helpful for inter faith organisations to be aware of the protection afforded to them in equalities legislation.
- 38 Some groups feel suspicious of, or excluded from, some inter faith initiatives.
- 39 Exploration of engagement between those who understand themselves to be religious and those who do not is very important (and IFN is undertaking some work on this). However, that does not mean that inter faith organisations should therefore be expanded to be all inclusive; it may be preferable to use other structures and processes for that avenue of dialogue.
- Resourcing the work**
- 40 Many local inter faith bodies say that it is hard to keep up with the pace of interest – particularly as few can afford an administrator or development worker.
- 41 Most groups run on a voluntary, or largely voluntary, basis but they still need funding for some aspects of their work – and this currently is in short supply.
- 42 Local authority funding is now often only available for projects – it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure it for core work.
- 43 Local inter faith groups need to monitor and evaluate their work. Funders always need to see information about their impact in terms of reach, activities and the outcomes from a funded project. And that information helps the funded body too.
- 44 The 'Faiths in Action' grant programme of the Department for Communities and Local Government, administered by the Community Development Foundation (CDF), supports dialogue and social action initiatives in local communities across England which increase understanding between people of faith and of no faith and contribute to better community relations.
- 45 Small local inter faith projects make a great contribution to the community life around them and a single small grant can

lead to increased contact with 'hard to reach' groups; benefits to the wider community; and an increase in volunteering in the local community, and, as a result, a well-connected community.

- 46 Diversifying funding and income sources is really important, and not just for local inter faith organisations, but for any organisation. Trusts, private donors, fundraising events, commissioning and tendering opportunities are all relevant.
- 47 Commissioning and funding bodies usually encourage partnership working; if you can demonstrate that you have very strong local connections and work with other projects, then your application is likely to have more appeal to a funder. Partnerships can also help with sharing resources and making local resources last longer and can strengthen engagement with all parts of the community.

### **Making the work known**

- 48 It is important to use all types of media well: to be crisp and clear in putting across the message; targeting stories well; building relationships with media; and having a worked out strategy for use of media.
- 49 Social media can be a cheap and efficient way of reaching a mass audience and raising awareness. It is vital to embrace it and use it in a positive way to put across your messages.
- 50 Websites are vital but they are time-consuming to keep updated. Also, there are trouble-makers out there on the internet who want to make controversial comments. So there can be an issue of quality control on a site.
- 51 Inter Faith Week is a most valuable platform for increasing involvement in local inter faith projects. Events from 'living libraries' and exhibitions to faith trails and 'open door' days, debates,

dialogues, quizzes, sports events, shared meals, school visits, classroom discussions and social projects highlight existing work and draw in new participants.

- 52 Local inter faith groups in some areas are welcoming visitors from abroad to share their work with them.

### **Involving young people**

- 53 Religious Education in schools is very important as it helps young people to understand more about the different beliefs of others in their society. Good RE in schools – supported by faith groups and Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education – helps develop inter faith understanding.
- 54 Young people have the potential to offer local inter faith groups a special kind of vitality and it is important to remember that this work must be handed over to the next generation.
- 55 We have to work in a more joined up and connected way with young people, for the sake of our very own futures. The challenge is to empower, enable and, very significantly, *resource* – not just in a financial sense but also in terms of people and places – our attempts to support all the various aspects of youth work.
- 56 It is important for young people to have a high degree of ownership of any group started for them and the projects they pursue. Key words are connectivity, innovation, listening and engagement rather than control.
- 57 Youth inter faith initiatives enable participants to make friendships they would not otherwise have made and to gain leadership skills. Providing young people with training and opportunities for empowerment is also very important.
- 58 Inter faith groups are often run by people who are already stretched beyond their

capacity; if no contacts with young people already exist it might be a challenge to find the time to develop these.

- 59 Much of the inter faith work involving young people is happening at a local level. It would be good to have more national and regional support specifically for work with young people.
- 60 Taking part in inter faith projects or training in inter faith skills should be encouraged as a positive career move for young people.

#### **National faith communities supporting – and learning from – local inter faith work**

- 61 National endorsement of local inter faith work is important. National faith community bodies can be supportive of local inter faith activity and can help spread the message further afield.
- 62 There is an increasing mainstreaming by national faith communities of inter faith work, with the appointment by some of designated inter faith officers, specialist committees, advisers and sometimes also development workers.
- 63 National faith community bodies also support local inter faith work through their own involvement in national inter faith initiatives which run programmes of work which assist local faith groups.
- 64 National bodies need to be willing to use their networks and their abilities to spread the message but also need to be willing and able to learn from local work that is going on and to draw on that expertise. What comes from the local level – the learning, the experience of people who are at the crossroads of these issues – is vital and it feeds back into and, in turn, shapes the strategies of national faith communities and inter faith bodies. Learning is a two-way process. The relationship between national faith bodies and local inter faith work needs to be one

where both partners are willing to learn.

- 65 Whether or not local faith community representatives become involved in local inter faith work can depend very much on attitudes in individual places of worship. National faith community organisations have a crucial role to play in taking the exercise of inter faith action to the grass roots level. Faith community umbrella organisations with direct contact with members can help make the inter faith exercise a great success, with its benefits shared widely at local level throughout the country.
- 66 Increasingly, national faith community bodies are supporting and encouraging their clergy and lay members in becoming involved in inter faith work in ways which are in keeping with the teachings of their tradition. Programmes run by national faith community bodies and national inter faith bodies for local clergy are helping clergy and lay people deepen their skills for dialogue and cooperation in their local communities.
- 67 It is very important for national faith community bodies to take responsibility for the training of their leaders and clergy, and to make sure that faith leaders are confident about inter-religious dialogue and will provide a role model for this. There is a need to ensure that inter faith relations is covered in the training of clergy.
- 68 Documents on inter faith relations by national faith community bodies are well placed to add value because of their 'authority' and the communication routes of the national bodies.
- 69 It is increasingly important for national community bodies to develop web-based resources for inter faith work.
- 70 To ensure strong faith community involvement at local level the involvement and support of national faith

organisations is needed. It may also help to make this local interaction more inclusive – ensuring involvement of different denominations and theological and ideological backgrounds.

- 71 Bringing together the benefits and achievements of inter faith work and making clear the dividends of inter faith dialogue is vital to getting more local faith groups' members involved. National bodies can draw together the local achievements and benefits so that these can be shared by the whole community.
- 72 National faith communities can assist local members through training (including special focus workshops); provision of material about inter faith dialogue and its validity in terms of the teachings of that tradition; and also tackling criticisms of, and suspicions and confusions among their members about, inter faith dialogue.

- 73 National faith community bodies are very different from each other, so there is a need to understand how each faith community organises itself at national level.

### **Particular issues**

- 74 There has to be a sense that faith communities involved in inter faith work are all valued and that it is not just the agenda of some communities or is beneficial to just a few. Where there is not a sense of this general value, people can be reluctant to get involved.
- 75 Some local inter faith bodies decide not to sign up to any particular political positions or discuss international issues as these would be too divisive.

### **General points**

- 76 Faith communities make a vital contribution to national life, guiding the moral outlook of many and inspiring great numbers of people to public service and

providing much succour to those in need.

- 77 People of good will in all faiths have a common and shared commitment to drawing together the moral and ethical arguments that they may wish to put to secular society.
- 78 We need to be passionate about what we do; to have trust in each other; and to have openness, even in the most difficult situations.
- 79 Education is very important. We should know more about one another's religions. We should try to discover what others believe in. This makes for harmony, for good friendship, and is very important even for our own well-being. Diversity is no good if we do not know what it involves. Diversity adds richness to our lives and this country provides ample proof of this.
- 80 When people see different faiths brought together they realise that we are all human and have many shared values.
- 81 Sometimes we can actually appreciate our own faith better when we discuss it with people of other beliefs. It is about respect for others, about the recognition of shared values and shared needs and the will to take action.
- 82 Promoting good inter faith relations and cross-faith cooperation for the common good is ever more important.



# Welcome

## **The Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern, *Bishop of Derby*** *Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK*

It is very good to have so many people at this National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network. I suggest we begin with a short moment of quiet during which we can reflect both on the wonderful opportunities for people of faith in our world at the moment and also on the challenges that we face and how we might play our part in rising to these.

We have nearly 150 people here today for this meeting focusing on local inter faith work.

We have a very distinguished line up of speakers and workshop leaders to help us look at the issues. There are people here from all the categories of membership of the Network, so it promises to be a rich and interesting occasion for all of us.

My task will be to try to keep us within the bounds of the agenda timetable so that everybody can make their contribution and we also have time to share with each other. I am first of all going to ask our Director, Harriet Crabtree, to set the scene for the day.



# Building good inter faith relations locally – a task for our times

**Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE**

*Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK*

You will be hearing in the course of today from people involved in a number of different ways in building good inter faith relations locally. I do not want, in my opening remarks, to pre-empt what they have to say by talking in detail about particular aspects of this work. Rather, what I would like to do is to sketch in some features of the changing landscape which may be relevant in thinking about how this tremendously important task is carried forward.

## A task for our times

I have chosen to offer my brief opening reflections under the title: A task for our times. A little solemn perhaps? Maybe. But I think that each generation finds that there are tasks – perhaps even duties – to which it must turn its hand with urgency.

It does not matter where we live – Blackburn or Belfast, Halifax or Hexham, Lincoln or Luton, Wrexham or Westminster, Solihull, Southampton or Skye – we all find ourselves living in local communities which are experiencing the currents of change: change which includes greater religious and cultural diversity within Britain – and echoes of the changes in Europe and the wider world.

Some of us live in communities where this change is daily visible; others of us live in communities where we encounter the impact of diversity through indirect routes such as the nature of the books we read; the television programmes we see; changes in

school syllabuses for RE and other subjects; the reports we read in the papers about issues such as the wearing of religious clothes and symbols; and the friend from a different faith the neighbour's daughter has made at university and brought home to stay for the holidays.

There is no place where the impact of population change is *not* to be experienced. We cannot, I think, avoid the conclusion that it matters a great deal how people of different religions get on with each other and how wider society – including people of non-religious beliefs – gets on with them (and vice versa).

So how are we all responding at a local level to this changing world and to the current challenges and the opportunities for building good inter faith relations locally? And what are some of the factors which affect how we are doing this?

In my reflections, I am going to consider how this work is taking place in a number of overlapping contexts:

- within local faith groups/communities;
- in educational contexts;
- with the engagement of local authorities (and other public bodies); and
- through the work of local inter faith organisations.

While I have separated local inter faith organisations out as an individual strand, their work is, of course, intertwined with that of every other strand.

## 1) Local faith groups

First, local faith groups.

An increasing number of local faith communities or faith groups are becoming involved in the work of developing good inter faith relations.

Involvement may be through formal links – for example through a place of worship affiliating to an inter faith council or local forum of faiths. Out of interest, how many people here belong to a local inter faith body which has membership from local faith community places of worship? A high number of you. That is a very important route for engagement.

Involvement may also be through clergy participating in programmes specifically for them such as those run by bodies like the Christian-Muslim Forum or the Joseph Interfaith Foundation or through courses at such centres as St Philip's in Leicester. Increasingly, national faith communities are encouraging and supporting their local clergy to become involved in building good inter faith relations locally. Later this morning Moulana Shahid Raza will be offering us a window into this from the perspective of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board of which he is Chair. We also have with us today national inter religious advisers and officers from a number of other faith communities who are carrying forward this kind of work of support and encouragement.

National faith communities are also encouraging their local lay members to become involved and working to provide guidance about how to do this in ways in keeping with the teaching and traditions of their faith. The document *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*, recently published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and

Wales, is an example and there are materials and programmes produced by the ecumenical agencies of the Christian Churches both at the Britain and Ireland level and at national level as well as by individual denominations such as the Church of England. Increasingly other faith communities are taking similar steps. In Workshop 6 we will be hearing from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Methodist Church and the Hindu community about how they are working to support engagement in local inter faith activity by both their clergy and laity.

I should add, of course, that the direction is not just one way. What comes from the local level – the learning, the experience of people who are at the crossroads of these issues – is vital and feeds back and, in turn, shapes the strategies of national faith communities and inter faith bodies.

Going back, briefly, to places of worship and their congregations, it is often particular special events or programmes which draw in local places of worship – and members of these who might not normally take part in inter faith initiatives: for example, those taking part in peace walks, pilgrimages or faith trails such as those in South London, Sandwell or Liverpool. Or, as we will be hearing later, Inter Faith Week providing a high profile opportunity for places of worship to open their doors or host events.

While these 'door openings' and pilgrimage participation opportunities may be one off or periodic opportunities for building good relations locally, they are very important. I quote from time to time the reflections of one of IFN's first Co-Chairs, Rabbi Hugo Gryn, about the importance of physically entering the worship space of others. Born in Czechoslovakia, Hugo was a survivor of Auschwitz. I recall a conversation with him some years ago where he talked about how where he had grown up no Jew ever went into a church; no Christian into a synagogue. He believed that this contributed to a profoundly dangerous incomprehension of each other's

worlds and he saw it as a factor which made people more open to Nazi propaganda. He believed it was tremendously important for people to experience the religious world of others – including through visits to their places of worship. It was a crucial part of developing inter faith understanding and an inoculation against dangerous ignorance.

While our world is very different in many respects from the world of continental Europe at the time of the Nazis, Hugo Gryn's insight remains a profoundly important one. How many of the people one hears, from time to time, inveighing against Muslims or mouthing ignorant statements about Hindu beliefs have actually ever visited a mosque or a temple or talked with worshippers there about their beliefs? Most of us in this room have probably visited places of worship of other faiths. Some of us have visited many. Not so, I would guess, most adults over 40 in Britain. Multi faith pilgrimages and peace walks; place of worship open days; and the kind of extensive programme of places of worship opening doors and hosting events during Inter Faith Week – these are important opportunities for learning. I am not saying that going into others' places of worship is a remedy for all problems; simply that it is a very important aspect of building good relations locally that people should have a chance actually to go into such places, meet people there and learn from them.

Most younger people, of course, have more opportunity, through RE, for such visits. And this takes me to my next strand.

## 2) Schools and other educational establishments.

The role of schools and other educators in helping pupils develop awareness of other faiths and skills for inter faith engagement is tremendously important.

I remember how, as a child growing up in the relatively monocultural city of York in the 1960s, I had very curious notions of Catholics

and Jews. We never really learned about different denominations of Christianity and my only experience was of the local Church of England parish church. I dimly thought that Catholicism was a sort of alternative religion which had a lot to do with lighting candles. And something to do with the Virgin Mary. And as to the Jews, they were descendants of the match stick men tribes of Israel which we drew in the last year of junior school who wore items like the phylacteries which we made out of match boxes in one of our lessons at secondary school and who were oddly implicated, according to our hymns, in the murder of Christ. Our schoolyard jokes contained the no doubt average complement for that era of casually anti-Semitic jokes.

You may think that level of ignorance is now a world away. If it is in most quarters, it is in some significant measure thanks to the efforts of those who teach RE and those who try to ensure that it has adequate resources – including SACREs and local inter faith groups – as well as of bodies like the Council of Christians and Jews, the Woolf Institute and Sisters of Sion, as well as to relevant legislation. Schools now also have a duty to promote community cohesion and that is another opportunity to find ways to reinforce learning about the importance of positive coexistence, of understanding each other, finding commonalities and also of appreciating genuine differences of perspective and practice and learning to disagree respectfully. Important, too, are bodies like 'Beat Bullying' which try to address religious dimensions of bullying.

Yesterday was the fifth anniversary of the bombings in London. In the wake of those – even though most would say that these were not genuinely religiously motivated – there has been increasing recognition of the importance of helping young people work through the kind of issues which can fan extremist political and religious interpretations of religious teachings. There have been, as we know, some concerns over the Government's Prevent programme. At the same time, however, there is little

disagreement, I think, that in educational contexts, young people need the chance to think through the kind of issues I have just described. Regardless of the particular community to which one belongs, it is extremely important to address the issue of how some people extract, decontextualise and render toxic messages from their own religion's teaching. Or, indeed, can misinterpret, parody or even vilify the religious teachings and practices of others. The development of good inter faith relations requires wrestling with such difficult issues through programmes of the kind on which the RE Council is working through its REsilience training for teachers. Also important is the emergence of youth faith forums and inter faith forums, and later today there will be a chance to hear a little bit more about these.

At all events, when we think about the task for our times of building good inter faith relations locally, schools and colleges of further education – and indeed also institutes of higher education – are prime places for this: both helping to create good relations between young people themselves now and also ensuring that they are enabled to play a key role in building good inter faith relations as they grow older.

In some areas such as Derby and Greater Manchester, as Workshop 4 will be hearing, there are youth inter faith forums under development. Quite a number have been supported in recent years through grants from the National Association of SACREs in England and the Inter Faith Youth Trust. The Scottish Inter Faith Council has also been encouraging youth inter faith dialogue as have a range of other bodies in IFN membership such as the Three Faiths Forum (whose Project Director gave a presentation at last year's IFN National Meeting which had a youth focus), the Christian-Muslim Forum, and a growing number of regional and local inter faith bodies such as the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum and the Southampton Council of Faiths which has recently appointed a Youth Inter Faith Officer – Naheed Brora, who

is with us here today.

### 3) The civic sphere

But let me move from the world of young people to the wider civic sphere and the relevance of this to the task of building good inter faith relations.

Sometimes this is through local authorities taking a direct role in relation to establishing or helping support faith forums. This has happened in a number of towns, cities and counties. Authorities such as Glasgow City Council and Devon County Council have given active support to the development of inter faith initiatives. Others such as Eastbourne and Braintree have recently begun to do so. Some authorities, such as Leicester, have helped fund the core costs of their local inter faith body for some time.

Two years ago, the Inter Faith Network worked in partnership with the Local Government Association on a survey of how local authorities in England and Wales were engaging with faith groups. The survey, *Local Authority Engagement with Faith Groups and Inter Faith Organisations*, published in December 2008, showed that the majority of councils believed that partnership working with local inter faith organisations helps to ensure that people from different backgrounds can interact positively and contributes to a greater sense of belonging within communities. It found just over half of councils have been involved in some way in helping to set up a local inter faith organisation and most (83 per cent) had become involved in other ways. One in three councils (35 per cent) at that time provided grants to support the work of inter faith organisations and three quarters consulted with local inter faith organisations, particularly on issues which could affect community cohesion and equality and priorities for Local Area Agreements.

This involvement has been much influenced, as we noted in the foreword to the report, by:

- greater recognition of the positive contribution which faith groups make – singly and together – to their local areas;
- inclusion in the Equality Act of ‘religion and belief’ as a strand and its prioritising of this alongside ‘race’ in ‘good relations’ work of the Equality and Human Rights Commission;
- greater awareness of the importance of religious identity to many people in Britain;
- increased recognition of the importance of the need to strengthen community cohesion;
- concern to prevent incidents of violent extremism (including those claiming a religious basis for the actions involved); and
- requirements to consult in a variety of contexts with all groups in the community.

It is interesting to reflect on how the rise in the interest of local government in inter faith relations has shaped the ways in which the work to promote good inter faith relations is now being carried out.

The various legislative prompts of recent years to consult all groups in the community have led local authorities to look for mechanisms which can act as consultative sounding boards. Sometimes this has been a matter of working with an existing multi faith forum or assisting in creating one. At other times it has also, or alternatively, taken the form of operating with a set of different bilateral consultations or using a sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership (or in Scotland, Community Planning Partnership; or in Wales, Local Service Board) and/or a faith representative on the LSP and/or as an interlocutor. Such consultative processes have a relevance to building good inter faith relations in so far as it is a prerequisite of good inter faith relations that people of all faiths feel fully part of their society and engaged

with effectively.

The ‘duty to involve’ and the interest in consulting through the use of particular multi faith structures has, though, brought some challenges for local inter faith bodies. Why is this? Broadly, many inter faith bodies came into existence at local level with a particular focus on dialogue, education and, sometimes, also joint social action. They did not usually begin as bodies which were set up with a view to operating as consultative panels. In areas where the local authority has seen the existing local inter faith body as inappropriate in make up or structure for consultative purposes it has occasionally set about creating or encouraging an additional body. And unless an existing body wishes to develop into a more structured and representative body this is, perhaps, likely to be the case and might in this kind of situation be the best solution.

Another complicating factor in some cases, to judge by anecdotal evidence, is that some local authorities have sought to determine the pattern of involvement of participation in inter faith and multi faith bodies: for example, requiring that full membership should be open to every religion and belief grouping, although equality legislation does offer inter faith organisations some protection in deciding on their membership. In any case, there appears to be, in some areas, a tricky situation in terms of building good inter faith relations in that faith groups are finding that they are pressed to determine in particular ways the membership of their local inter faith body if this is to be given financial support by, or work with, a local authority. This will be one of the issues under discussed in Workshop 2 this afternoon.

One might encapsulate the challenge for local authorities and local inter faith bodies as being that of finding a way to work together where the different perspectives and concerns of both are respected. This means local inter faith bodies understanding the policy imperatives under which local authorities are acting and local authorities having a care that



they are not trying to run inter faith bodies or to determine how faith communities choose to come to the table. Getting partnership right is very important because of the significance of this task. It is in the interest of every local authority to encourage initiatives which help people in its area to live well and interact well. And in their recognition of the importance of local inter faith initiatives in helping to achieve this, local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships are important partners. Many are truly interested and supportive. If you look at the pattern of work that happened during Inter Faith Week, you will see local authorities were involved in very good programmes in many areas.

The challenge is for local groups and for local authorities to find ways to work well together, to work out their partnership in ways where each respects the integrity of each other's different sets of priorities. These overlap, but they are not identical. It is going to be very interesting to see how the new Government and its policy in relation to local government affects patterns of engagement. A great deal of focus in early discussion about this has focused on how faith groups can deliver services. But this, of course, is just one aspect of engagement with faith based bodies. What will be interesting is to see how the broader 'Big Society' agenda develops and how local inter faith bodies will contribute to this. Also, how the new Government will be taking forward the community relations and equalities agendas – whether under the heading 'community cohesion' or in some different way and with different language. It is early days. It is important that Communities Minister Andrew Stunell will be with us this morning to share some reflections on these kinds of issues. The Department for Communities and Local Government's encouragement of inter faith work has been a very significant factor in its growth in recent years.

#### 4) Local inter faith bodies

Let me turn last, and most definitely not least, to local inter faith bodies themselves.

Local inter faith organisations contribute powerfully to greater understanding and cooperation between people of different faith communities in their areas by creating opportunities for learning, interaction and engagement.

There has been an astonishing growth in inter faith activity across the last twenty years – especially in the last five years. The number of local inter faith bodies has 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. It also notes the existence of branches of the Council of Christians and Jews. And since it was published a further 15 multi faith local inter faith bodies are known to have emerged.

Most of the UK's local groups came into existence organically, emerging at the grassroots to increase dialogue and good relations. But since the late '90s a good number have come into existence, as I have just noted, 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.

A broad typology which the IFN office uses sees these bodies on a spectrum:

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 type 2 but often set up by, or with the assistance of, local authorities or Local Strategic Partnerships to create a mechanism for nominating to the Local Strategic Partnership and giving input to this and to other initiatives. Some have a significant role in regeneration or neighbourhood renewal.

4. *Faith leaders groups*. These have many similarities to the type of group at 2 above but are usually groupings convened by one faith (in England generally the Church of England) and without an organisational structure or ongoing funding. They generally operate alongside existing inter faith bodies.

Names and types do not always match exactly. Some bodies called 'groups' function more like 'councils' and vice versa. There is no set model and people develop the models which they see as most appropriate for their local areas. For this reason IFN does not seek to promote just one approach.

Local inter faith organisations bring groups and individuals of different faiths together to contribute to a harmonious local community and to the well being of society through a broad range of activity from dialogue, to education, to civic engagement and social cooperation. They play a tremendously important role in their local communities. We are hearing today – in the plenary and the workshops – from and about a number of different groups around the UK which each have distinctive approaches and programmes.

Why is their work so very important? Because, while inter faith issues are tackled in many different contexts – from schools, to local authorities, to the media – local inter faith bodies are about faith communities and their members opting to work together for inter religious understanding and cooperation. They, together with the faith communities they include, are at the heart of the work.

In this work, they face big challenges. The ones which we have been hearing most about

in the last year are:

- Worries about capacity – including the lack of people available to carry out leadership and management roles and to be able to attend the increasing number of events at which the groups are being invited to be represented. I have lost count of the number of times – as I am sure is also the case for those at the Regional Forums in England and the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish inter faith linking bodies – of people saying they just cannot keep up with the present pace of interest. We have moved into a world where inter faith work has shifted from being a minority interest, something seen as peripheral and 'do it if you've got the time', to something that is seen as critical to the well-being of our communities, nationally and locally. Little groupings – and we all, national as well as local inter faith bodies, are tiny by comparison to many voluntary organisations – are fielding ever greater requests to be involved.
- Anxiety about structure – for example, trying to respond to the wish of ever more groupings to be involved, at the same time as keeping the involvement of the existing major faith groupings (some of which are uncomfortable about being at the same table as sectarian offshoots or new religious movements) – and puzzlement about the impact of recent equalities legislation on how they handle this. Some find themselves confronted with the desire to be as inclusive as possible and at the same time have to deal with the fact that some of the people at the table give an indication that they will withdraw if others come to the table that they do not recognise as bona fide faith groups.
- A concern that issues of structure, management and funding leave limited time and energy for taking forward the work itself. There can be a sense of being caught between two models: the model of a professionalised local voluntary body with a staff member and significant time

being spent on ensuring good organisational practice (and registering as a charity and possibly also as a limited company) and the model of a loose voluntary association. Then there are challenges in funding the work. We are delighted that later today Anna Allen from the Community Development Foundation is going to be with us and she will talk about funding issues.

- Challenges in making the work known and getting more people involved. We are going to hear in one of the workshops about the importance of making good use of media and, in another workshop, from Resham Singh Sandhu, about strategies for engaging faith communities more strongly in local inter faith work.

Despite the many challenges, local inter faith bodies are continuing to play a vital role in helping develop inter faith understanding and cooperation at local level. In the course of the plenary sessions and the workshops there will be a chance to hear about how some of them are developing their programmes and increasing the profile of their work.

## Conclusion

To conclude: Whatever we hear about the challenges, we never hear people saying that the work is not important, or that they do not still wish to give their all to it. What we hear are the messages of people who are struggling, but who are finding very creative ways forward, trying to re-energise, often trying to rebuild after funding has come and gone, but always remembering how important their work is.

We can, of course, never easily see our own time and situation with full clarity. We are in the midst of change, particularly with the first new Government for 13 years. Only with the vantage point of history will we be able to see what has worked and what has not and what has proven to be of lasting significance. But I would argue that we can read the signs of the times sufficiently to have a well founded

conviction that work to bring about inter-religious understanding in the UK – and also understanding about different religions and between them and wider society – is one of the most vital tasks of our time. This is true at every level and local faith communities and inter faith bodies are at the forefront of this vital task.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much indeed. We thank Harriet not just for her wisdom in those points made to us, which provide a very sharp and helpful summary of where we are at and some of the issues we face, but also the amazing work she does on behalf of all of us in being Director of the Network. She and her colleagues are under increasing pressure, because as she ended by saying, the interest is increasing, and we have to look in the Network at how we respond to that and provide proper support.

Now in my crib sheet it says ‘a few minutes for questions’. I am not going to give a few minutes for questions, because if things have registered with you there will be other opportunities to raise them and pursue them in workshops or in other plenary sessions. Because we have got Andrew Stunell coming quite soon, I think I would like to move on to our next item.



# Developing good relations in the multi faith city

## Kashmir Singh Rajput

*Chair, Bradford District Faiths Forum*

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Kashmir Singh Rajput is going to talk to us from his perspective as Chair of the Bradford District Faiths Forum about developing good relations in a multi faith city. Thank you very much for being with us.

**Kashmir Singh Rajput:** I have been the Chair of Bradford District Faiths Forum since 2007. Before I commit to a role like that, I ask myself: “Am I passionate about this?” And the answer in this case was “Yes”. In this work we have to be passionate about faith and about developing positive relationships so that we can promote good relations and take the society, the different communities and groups forward. Local inter faith work is absolutely important.

This presentation was going to be a joint one with my colleague, Canon Arun John. He could not be here today, so he asked me to give the presentation on my own and I will do my best to do so.

I think it is important to give you an idea of Bradford’s character. It is a truly multi-religious place with various communities within it. There is a rich religious diversity. Christians make up 60% of its population, Muslims 16% and Sikhs, Hindus and Jews together around 1%. People are working at various levels to take their own communities forward.

The Faiths Forum began in 2003, following 9/11 and Bradford’s riots in 2001. People thought that a forum of this kind was needed and gathered the local faith organisations together and invited them to share the good work they do within their own communities.

Later, in 2004, two people who were heavily involved in Religious Education were appointed to work with the various groups which agreed a ‘Declaration of Intent’ and in 2004 the Forum was properly launched. The local authority gave us a grant of £30,000 to develop the Forum and in 2006 we were encouraged to become an independent body so that we could raise our own funding and decide what is important for the faiths in Bradford.

The Forum has a Board of Directors and 16 to 17 representatives from the main communities, together with involvement from local inter faith groups. We have a Baha’i member, a Buddhist, five Christians, three Hindus, one Jewish member, three Muslims, two Sikhs and three members from local inter faith groups. We currently have a part-time administrator, a part-time youth worker and a full time development coordinator.

In terms of the Forum’s aims and objectives, in the light of 9/11 and the riots in Bradford in 2001, one of the key issues was the need to promote social inclusion, community cohesion and understanding about the various groups. We needed to have clear lines of communication with different groups and to try to develop positive relationships between them. These are key in moving forward and making progress on various fronts.

We have membership from many faith bodies in Bradford. We have the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Bradford; the Kashyapa Buddhist Centre; the Bradford Anglican diocese; the Roman Catholic diocese of Leeds

(which Bradford is within); Shree Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple and Shree Prajapati Hindu Mandir, which are part of the Hindu Cultural Society; the Bradford Reform Synagogue; the Bradford Council of Mosques; and the Board of Representatives of Bradford Gurdwaras. All these groups are working with the Faiths Forum and fully support us in various ways.

Cohesion *within* communities is also important. For example, from the outside it may look as though the Sikh community is very cohesive, but it is not! When you go inside the community then you find various types of issues that may hinder its progress. Similarly, for the Council of Mosques, there are some internal issues in the Muslim community. So we need to promote cohesion within our own communities too. It took us 18 months to unite Sikhs in Bradford, working with six gurdwaras, because there were issues about who was going to represent the community at various civic events. But that has worked really well. We agreed to rotate the chairmanship of the Board of the Gurdwaras, because that is crucial. If people are committed and passionate, anyone can help in this work, because we can support each other.

Recently, a synagogue in Bradford was going through hard times and was at risk of being closed. It was very painful for the Faiths Forum to see that happening, as we took the view that this is part of our religious diversity which we should not lose. So we offered to work with the Jewish community to raise the money to keep the synagogue open. Our co-ordinator, Nasar Fiaz, has been working very hard on this and many fundraising events have been held to maintain it. What are we going to tell our children if a synagogue disappears, if churches are disappearing and gurdwaras also perhaps disappear in the next twenty years? What are we going to tell them? This is the time to work together to maintain our places of worship so that our grandchildren can benefit from this rich religious diversity.

To identify issues of importance we have bi-monthly Forum meetings; we carry out specific locality-based projects; and we liaise with statutory bodies, for example, through having representatives on local authority, police and various other bodies. We try to be proactive and to maintain regular contact with faith leaders. For example, there was recent bloodshed in Pakistan with attacks on the Ahmadiyya community. The Forum had a meeting with the local Ahmadiyyas to offer them support in this situation.

There are steps we take to identify proactively the key issues on which we need to concentrate in the future. We decided, from the outset, that we would develop positive partnerships with various communities, whether bilaterally or trilaterally. The first partnership was in promoting the Jewish Way of Life exhibition, bringing that exhibition to Bradford for the first time in its 30 year history. Not only that, in the 30 year history of the exhibition for the first time it was held at the premises of a Muslim organisation, with five hundred people attending.

The other partnership programme is one which we have developed with the University of Bradford: the 'Faith and the City' programme. This is the very successful programme of debate around values, politics, cohesion, equality and social justice. Young people are heavily involved in discussing these issues and the ways forward to address them. We have had many speakers, including Baroness Warsi, now a member of the Cabinet, and Professor Ludi Simpson, who had just published a book, *Sleepwalking into Segregation*, dismantling some myths about segregation and explaining the role of the media in spreading misinformation.<sup>1</sup>

There are also two faith-based community projects, that are proving very successful. One project, linked to St Paul's Manningham and in which Canon Arun John plays a big role, is called 'Sharakat' which means 'working together'. It has been very successful in involving the local communities, businesses

<sup>1</sup> *Sleepwalking to Segregation?: Challenging Myths About Race and Migration*, Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson, Policy Press, 2009.

and other organisations. It works with the statutory bodies, such as the police and the local authority. One of the issues raised at a Sharakat meeting was that a significant number of young people were driving without insurance, which the police addressed pretty quickly.

Another project which we have now developed is called 'Sadbhavna Sangateer' which means 'Good Will Gathering'. This brings together St Paul's Church, and the Shree Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple. The Sikh and Hindu communities in Bradford felt that they were being ignored because they only form around 1% of the population and so more attention is focused on the concerns of the Muslims. So the Forum had meetings with the Hindu and Sikh communities. We launched that project last year and it has been very successful.

We also have various projects where we can use a common theme to unite young people and to celebrate festivals together. We held a 'Faith in the Environment Week' and about 30 people worked with us on that. This again helps us to celebrate the positive aspects of each religion. We tend to hold events in a neutral setting because there are people who are still reluctant to go into places of worship other than their own.

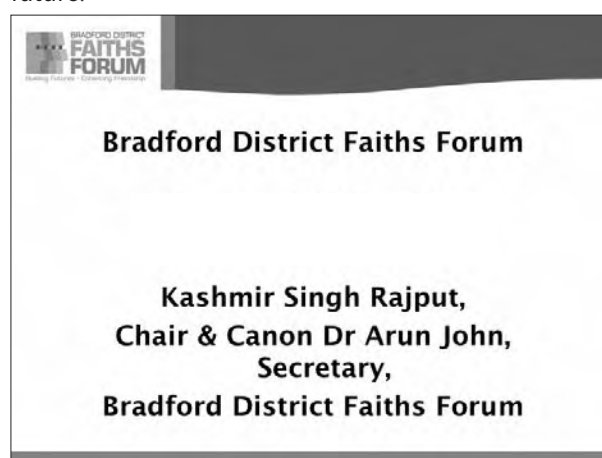
This year we arranged for a group of people to come from different communities and to be part of the procession for the Sikh festival, Vaisakhi. People do not feel comfortable unless there is proper planning and support for these events.

We have now developed a partnership with the 'Treasures Revealed' project, creating a 'faith trail' between five places of worship – a gurdwara, a temple, a cathedral, a local church and a mosque – so that children and people from every walk of life, from very young children to the elderly, can come and enjoy each place of worship. That has been launched and we ran one trail last month.

Finally, I should mention that we will be re-

launching very soon the Bradford District Faiths Forum website and you will be able to see on that all the work we have done so far.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much. It was good, having had a general introduction from Harriet Crabtree, to have had such a clear and inspiring exposition of partnership and working within a local civic framework, developing the kind of relationships and good working practices that Harriet challenged us to think about for the future.



**Bradford Statistics**

[www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk)

Category	Bradford	Yorkshire & the Humber	England
Total population	467,665	4,964,833	49,138,831
Christian	60.14%	73.07%	71.74%
Buddhist	0.11%	0.14%	0.28%
Hindu	0.95%	0.32%	1.11%
Jewish	0.08%	0.23%	0.52%
Muslim	16.08%	3.81%	3.10%
Sikh	1.02%	0.38%	0.67%
Any other religion	0.21%	0.19%	0.29%
No religion	13.31%	14.09%	14.59%
Religion not stated	8.11%	7.77%	7.69%



## Structure of the Faiths Forum

- **Board of Directors**  
3 Christian, 2 Hindu, 1 Jewish, 3 Muslim & 2 Sikh, 1 Keighley
- **Faiths Forum**  
**1 Baha'i, 1 Buddhist, 5 Christian, 3 Hindu, 1 Jewish, 3 Muslim, 2 Sikh, 3 local interfaith groups**
- **3 Members of Staff:** P/T Administrator and Youth Worker. F/T Development Coordinator

## Building Partnerships

- Cross sector partnership to promote and develop bilateral relationships
- Developed Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Bradford, launched Faith and the City
- Experimental initiatives where two faiths have come together launch Sharakat and Goodwill Gathering

## Aims and Objectives

- Promoting understanding, communication, cooperation, and good relations
- Promote social inclusion and combat religious discrimination
- Advance public knowledge and understanding of the different faith communities in Bradford District

## Jewish Way of Life Exhibition (JWOLE)

- Launch Event, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009
- 500 people from all walks of life attended
- Partnership between Faiths Forum, Education Bradford, Board of Deputies of British Jews and Council for Mosques
- Press coverage in Jewish and local press
- Positive angle of building on Jewish and Muslim relations in Bradford

## Faith Community Involvement

- **Membership of the Faiths Forum:**
  1. Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Bradford
  2. Kashyapa Buddhist Centre
  3. Bradford Diocese; RC Diocese of Leeds
  4. Shree Lakshmi Narayan & Shree Prajapati Mandir
  5. Bradford Reform Synagogue
  6. Bradford Council for Mosque's
  7. Board of Representative of Bradford Gurudwaras

## JWOLE



## Identifying Issues of Importance

- Bi Monthly Faith Forum Meetings
- Specific locality based projects
- Liaison with statutory bodies e.g. local authority, police
- Proactive and regular contact with faith leadership

## Faith & the City

- Partnership with the University of Bradford
- Programme of Speakers, Exhibitions and Performances
- Aim is to act as a catalyst for dialogue, debate, discourse and discussion
- Around the broad topics of politics, values, religion, cohesion and equality



## Faith & the City

- Speakers so far include, Moazzam Begg, Noorzaman Rashid, Shami Chakrabarti, Alyas Karmani, Baroness Warsi, Ziauddin Sardar, Professor Ludi Simpson, Dr Ed Kessler, Chris Chivers and Anjum Anwar
- Speakers to come include William Dalrymple, Inderjit Singh, Fatima Bhutto and Peter Osborne
- 2000 people attended

## Goodwill Gathering



## An Audience with Baroness Warsi



## Interfaith Cricket Match



## Sharakat

- A Joint initiative – St Paul's (Christians) and Save the Mothers Trust (Muslim).
- This is an attempt to create a faith based community cohesive programme to be owned by two major faiths in Manningham.
- BDFF plays the role of a broker and acts as partner in this project.

## Celebrating Faiths Festivals Together



## Goodwill Gathering

- A joint initiative of St. Paul's Church (Christians) and Shree Lakshmi Narayan Temple – Hindu Cultural Society.
- Mr Kashmir Singh and Canon Dr. Arun John through BDFF have given a good listening to the Hindu and Sikh communities in Bradford
- They had expressed their concern for not being given enough attention to minority faiths communities in Bradford (both by majority faiths and the local Council).

## Tree Planting Day



## Artistic Performances from the Faiths of Bradford



## Other areas of work

- Strategic relationships with all faith groups
- Information Service
- Regular Newsletter
- Visits to places of worship
- Coordination with Neighbourhood Services
- Places of Worship Directory

## Young people at Vaisakhi Parade



## PARTNERS

- Bradford Council
- University of Bradford
- Education Bradford
- Hindu Cultural Society
- Board of Deputies of British Jews
- Bradford Council for Mosques
- Board of Representatives of Bradford Gurdwaras
- CAFCASS
- Bradford Diocese

## Youth Interfaith Football Tournament



## STRATEGIC LEVEL

- Bradford Strategic Partnership (LSP)
- Equality Forum (Local Authority)
- SACRE
- Bradford Teaching Hospitals, E & D Scrutiny Committee
- Police Advisory Committee
- Strategic support from Asst Director of Safer and Stronger Communities

## Faiths Forum Website



## Contact Details

**T: 01274 395398**

**E: [bradford.faiths@btconnect.com](mailto:bradford.faiths@btconnect.com)**



# A perspective from government on the importance of local inter faith work as part of developing good community relations

**Andrew Stunell OBE, MP**

*Parliamentary Under Secretary Of State,  
Department for Communities and Local Government*

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** I can now introduce Andrew Stunell MP, who is the Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Department for Communities and Local Government, with which the Inter Faith Network has long enjoyed a good working relationship. Last year, we were partners together in promoting the first Inter Faith Week in England, and we are looking forward to the Week being repeated this year. Andrew Stunell's responsibilities include the Big Society agenda and community cohesion, which are important issues for us at all the different levels through which the Inter Faith Network operates. We are delighted that you are here today and are very interested to hear what you have to say to us. Welcome.

**Andrew Stunell MP:** Thank you very much. I am afraid that I am doing what Government Ministers often do – which is to arrive late, speak and leave early! But the Prime Minister is visiting my Department shortly this morning and you will understand that I need to be there.

Perhaps I can start by saying that the new Government's approach is very strongly aligned with the kind of work that you are doing. The 'Big Society' is the catch phrase. It is all about making sure that local

communities, local neighbourhoods and local groups, including faith groups, can play an active part, and feel empowered to make a real contribution to society. I have been looking at IFN's report and evaluation of last autumn's Inter Faith Week. I shall be honest and admit that I have thus far only got as far as page 40, but on that page, there is – an excellent editorial choice! – a report on the Week's activities in my home borough of Stockport. I was delighted to see that.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has responsibility within Government for community issues – for making sure that the Big Society really works. My role as the Minister responsible for the issues to do with faith and cohesion is right at the heart of that and I am looking forward to a long term dialogue and relationship with you.

Faith communities make a vital contribution to national life, guiding the moral outlook of many (including myself as a nonconformist Christian), inspiring great numbers of people to public service and providing much succour to those in need. Your meeting today is about inter faith dialogue and action at the local level. That links straight into the agenda for the Big Society that the Government is hoping

to build. It is very encouraging to see as many groups as there are here today from all the categories of the Network's membership. I have to say that you are all doing excellent work with many different approaches as we all move towards a shared goal – building understanding between people from different backgrounds, different cultures, different histories – not just sitting around tables and talking about it, but actually getting out and doing it; and, looking very briefly at some of the slides presented by our friend from Bradford, working together on community projects as well. Your work on building up mutual respect and understanding helps to bind together local communities and improve relations at a time when the siren calls of the extremists are pulling in the other direction; and also at a time when the country's difficult economic circumstances mean the pressures at community level, at local level, are going to be greater.

This report on Inter Faith Week sets out the very many different activities which took place last November – I was very pleased, incidentally, that my Liberal Democrat colleague Julia Goldsworthy was able to speak at the launch event and exhibition. I was delighted to see your report with its excellent exposition of what happened, not just in Stockport but all over the country. There were really good projects and, as the report points out, the Week led to an expansion of inter faith work and the setting up of more inter faith groups and fresh activity – a ripple effect which is all to the good.

I am looking forward to Inter Faith Week this November. This time it will be on a slightly different basis, not a partnership between my department and the Network as last year, but with the Network leading, although my civil servants, (who are here today), will be ready to help Harriet Crabtree and her team as before. I would very much encourage all of you to get involved in the Week and let us see if we can get the media coverage to provide a little higher profile than last time.

My Secretary of State has not yet made an

announcement about funding and support for the Week so I cannot give you any detailed figures on this, but I hope that we may have some good news for you quite soon.

I can report that applications have been flowing into the Community Development Foundation for small grants under the 'Faiths in Action' scheme. I understand there are 113 projects already up and running. As you know, money is genuinely very tight but we are seeing if we can continue to support that scheme financially. Again, I think you can expect some good news soon on that.

Looked at overall, the inter faith field is in very good health, with well over 100 new local groups having started up in recent years. I am told that there are now over 250 local groups. Much of this work is self starting. You certainly do not need the Government to make it happen. People of good will in all faiths have a common and shared commitment to drawing together the moral and ethical arguments that we want to put to our secular society. So you are very much part of the picture that the Government is anxious to support. We all know this is not about compromising individual beliefs. Sometimes we can actually appreciate our own faith better when we discuss it with people of other beliefs. It is about respect for others, about the recognition of shared values and shared needs and the will to take action. It is really good to be here in this room today with people who are helping to make that happen.

I should finish by just paying a tribute on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government to the staff at the Inter Faith Network office. While I am new to this job, (very new in fact since the General Election was only nine weeks ago today), I have already heard a great deal about the work that the Network has been doing over the years. So I am looking forward to seeing good practice spreading and developing across the country. I am looking forward to the Department being able to continue to have a good, strong relationship with you and to seeing this build up to the Big Society which



is at the heart of what the Government is trying to achieve. Thank you very much for listening. I am ready to take a few questions, but then I shall need to be off to see the Prime Minister.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much. What you have said is really helpful. You made two comments on which we are all united. One is that people of faith are always looking forward to good news so thank you for saying that we might be able to have some soon! Secondly, we are also united in appreciation of Harriet and her colleagues and the work that they do. So it is good that you join us in that.

## There then followed a short question period:

**Martin Pendergast:** I am one of the Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Alliance (UK) and I would like to ask the Minister what kind of interaction there might be – given that some of the issues that emerge in this particular context are very sensitive and quite controversial – between your Department and the Equalities Minister and the Ministry of Justice in the new administration.

**Andrew Stunell MP:** My colleague Lynn Featherstone is the Minister for Equalities in the Home Office and I have already had a couple of meetings with her about the way ahead on those matters. There are, of course, a number of really quite tricky issues – which I do not need to rehearse here – and we are working together to see how we tackle them. We are absolutely committed as a Government to opposing discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief, culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. There are some points of tension in that as I well understand. I hope you will judge us by our performance and I am sure that you will let me know if you think we are not delivering on these issues.

**Dr Manazir Ahsan:** As a Vice-Chair of the Inter Faith Network, I would like to welcome you

on behalf of the Inter Faith Network. I would also like to welcome you on behalf of the Muslim community. You have taken up a heavy responsibility and we hope that you are successful in delivering what you have described. We are grateful to you for emphasising the importance of Inter Faith Week, which was one of the great successes that we had last year. I hope you will take an interest in ensuring that we repeat what we achieved last year and, with support, even go further than that. We look forward to working together.

**Andrew Stunell MP:** I thank Dr Ahsan for his kind words. The interest in inter faith work is certainly going to be there. It is very important to us, not just philosophically, but practically, given the kind of community engagement we want to achieve, in every town, village, neighbourhood and community in Britain. Not just where there are potential difficulties but everywhere. To do so we have to engage with faith communities of every type, shape and size in order to make that happen, because at the heart of so many communities there is a religious institution of one sort or another. If you look at civic society across England for the last hundred, or even two hundred years, you see that nearly all civic leadership has come from people of faith who have had a commitment which has taken them beyond their faith into civic engagement. That should still be the case and that is something that we are very keen to deliver on. On the issue of funding for the Week I cannot be quite as positive, but as I tried to indicate, I do not think you need to start crying, yet at least.

**Harmander Singh:** I am representing Redbridge Faith Forum here today but my question goes wider. Can we be assured that faith does not play second fiddle within the various strands of discrimination given that there are competing priorities; and will our Government resist the suggestion, from Brussels or elsewhere that ours should be a secular state which *disrespects* all religions equally (like they do elsewhere in Europe), rather than *respecting* them all equally?

**Andrew Stunell MP:** There is a risk that I might miss meeting the Prime Minister if I answer that question fully! But let me say a little about where I am coming from personally. I am a Baptist. Four hundred years ago the Baptists had to flee from this country and set up in Holland because of religious persecution, so you can take it that I am very strongly committed to freedom of religion, freedom of worship and freedom of thought. Actually, I think that having a secular United Kingdom helps us, in that it is not just centred and based on just one specific expression of faith. So I am in favour of a secular state and I am in favour of freedom and the open tolerance of all religion and faiths and their expression. But let us not forget that occasionally some of that expression can lead to anti-social consequences for others and it is quite right for the state to take a view about that. It is an interesting debate, an interesting dialogue, but I fear my meeting with the Prime Minister may have to take precedence over getting fully engaged in it today!

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much indeed for coming to speak to us and we hope there will be other occasions when we can continue this conversation.

**Andrew Stunell MP:** I very much look forward to that.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** We are now going to have ten minutes for ‘Dialogue on the spot’ – a chance to talk with your neighbour about what you have heard so far today and the questions that have been raised for you and perhaps we can bring some of those into the meeting as we go on.

# Developing local inter faith work in less diverse areas

## Dr Maureen Sier

*on secondment from the Scottish Inter Faith Council to the Scottish Executive/Government*

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** I hope a lot of good ideas and reflections have been exchanged. I am now going to ask Dr Maureen Sier to give us her presentation about developing local inter faith work in less diverse areas.

**Dr Maureen Sier:** First, can I say that I am absolutely delighted to be here. It is always a great pleasure to attend events here at the UK Inter Faith Network. I have been asked to speak about rural inter faith groups in Scotland, so I want first of all briefly to describe to you the broader Scottish context.

There are 15 local inter faith groups in Scotland. Some are in urban centres: two each in Glasgow and Edinburgh and one apiece in Dundee and Aberdeen. Some are in rural communities such as Shetland, Orkney and Skye. Then there are inter faith groups in areas where there is an urban centre, but most of it is rural. I have called those mixed area groups – Dumfries and Galloway, Central Scotland, Fife, Inverness, Moray and East Renfrewshire.

I wondered how I could capture today what it might be like to live in an area that really is quite remote but does have an inter faith group. Perhaps most of the rural inter faith groups get their stimulus from an urban centre fairly close by. So I thought, where in Scotland would that not be the case – where would you have to fly to the nearest big urban centre or take a long boat trip and where would you not be getting your stimulus from an urban centre? So I decided I would focus on Shetland, which is the most northerly

island in the British Isles and where there is certainly the most northerly inter faith group in Scotland.

What is Shetland like as a place? It has a population of just under 22,000. 20% of the population is under 16. 1.1% are from ethnic minorities, whereas the Scottish average for ethnic minorities is 2%. It is very beautiful and very rural. Over the last 5,000 to 6,000 years, Shetland has become home to successive waves of immigrants – the Picts, the Norse and the Scots. Of today's inhabitants, roughly a third were born outside of the Islands and a wide range of nationalities are represented there. The Islands have always welcomed temporary visitors – lots of people visit Shetland as tourists – and all of this makes for a community that is generally tolerant, welcoming and vibrant. (I got that from a Shetland website and I don't think they'd say anything else on that! But I'm sure it is true!).

Rural areas are really not disconnected from the rest of the world. Just to give you an example, eight of the schools in Shetland are involved in a Global Classroom project. Through this they are communicating from their tiny island with young people from diverse faith backgrounds. I think that is really quite important, to know that no matter how rural your location, you are connected with the rest of the world, in all sorts of different ways.

Shetland is home to people of different faiths and of none. The Islands – and again this is from their website! – have no tradition of

religious extremism or intolerance. It says “Unlike some parts of Scotland, you will find little overt display of religion, and no attempt by one group to impose a particular lifestyle on any other”. It is quite interesting that they felt that they needed to put that on their website. The largest faith group is Christian, and there are several strands in this, including Presbyterian, Anglican and Roman Catholic. However there are also followers of most world faiths, including Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Baha’i faith and Buddhism. Other approaches and philosophies, for example Paganism and Humanism, also have adherents on the island.

There is an inter faith group on Shetland which has been operating for about six years now. It gained a huge impetus when the Revd Tom Macintyre, a Church of Scotland minister from Paisley, just outside of Glasgow, moved up to Shetland. It had been meeting regularly for years – just a group of seven or eight people coming together for dialogue – but when Mr Macintyre took up post as the Church of Scotland minister on the island of Shetland, he moved inter faith activity to a new level. He had already been involved with the Scottish Inter Faith Council and had been its Vice-Chair, but when he came to Shetland, he said, “We have to get out and find out what groups – what communities – there are out there” and the group drew in a number of ‘invisible’ families and groups that were just working away in Shetland but actually had never been contacted and brought into the inter faith dialogue. So now they have a very vibrant inter faith group.

This is what members of the Shetland Inter Faith Group say are the aims of their group – “To work together as people of faith for a just and inclusive Shetland; to help build and maintain good relations and greater understanding between different communities of faith and belief; to encourage the sharing of knowledge and understanding of faith and belief among the people of Shetland; to provide a forum for discussion on faith issues of mutual concern; to support within a faith context the integration of ethnic

minorities into Shetland society; and to act as a body for consultation by statutory and other bodies who are seeking the views of people of the different faiths in Shetland.” You will recognise all these aims as being very similar to what you would have in an urban inter faith group.

I contacted Tom Macintyre and asked him what the group had done recently. He told me that members had got together and shared words of inspiration, each faith offering scripture and comment; that there was an exciting schools conference during Scottish Inter Faith Week involving all the pupils in four of the secondary schools; that a talk had been given recently to the Shetland Rotary Club; and that there had been an Inter Faith Burns Supper. (Actually, Inter Faith Burns suppers have happened all over Scotland. I was recently involved in one in the synagogue in Glasgow and had a fantastic day there preparing vegetarian food and kosher haggis in the kosher kitchen!) The group had also held a family variety concert to raise funds for a local charity. Shetland is incredibly musical and so quite a number of the local inter faith events include music, which is very uplifting and very vibrant.

We made arrangements recently for a couple of international speakers to go up to Shetland. I do not know if any of you have heard of Dr Leonard Swidler – you may well have done so in an inter faith context. He has written a number of books on inter faith topics. He and Dr Racelle Weiman were coming to Scotland, and we thought “Where in Scotland will we take them so that they will have a really good impact?” So they went up to Shetland. A Shabbat service was held in the public library, hosted by Dr Weiman, who is Jewish. It was the first time ever, I think, that most Shetland islanders had been invited to take part in such a service. Racelle, who is from Philadelphia, said in the morning, “We will have to go to the supermarket and get the special bread we have on Shabbat.” I was thinking, “Oh, no! There is just absolutely not going to be any of this special bread at the local supermarket.” So she said, “Well, never mind, I will just get a

loaf of some sort.” But one of the Shetlanders, Mandy Hepburn, from my own faith community, went online to find out how to make this special bread, and so when we came back from the supermarket with some ordinary, very boring bread as we walked into the house, Racelle said, “I am smelling my challah bread!” Then Mandy took it out of the oven, having baked it for her. It was just so lovely to see, even in the most rural area of the country, that you can, with a bit of creativity, make someone feel very welcome in that kind of way. This was a service to which about 40 or 50 people came and it was a quite special event.

The Scottish Inter Faith Council and the Scottish Government as well have been wonderful in supporting these rural communities. My post within the Scottish Government is to work to support local inter faith groups across Scotland and also to help them to develop, but I could not do that without the back-up and support of the Scottish Inter Faith Council as well.

I asked Tom Macintyre to let me know what he felt were the challenges for the Shetland inter faith group and what impact it has had on the island. He said that the biggest challenge for them is that the majority of people on Shetland do not see the need for an inter faith group as there are no issues or serious incidents regarding faith there. He said there is no antagonism towards the inter faith group – rather a little apathy. But he said that the impact of the group being there has definitely improved community relations. Its events are well received and attended, and people generally endorse its objectives and agree that this kind of activity in relationship building is a good idea. There has been excellent feedback from the school events in particular. This is important for the future. Shetland Island Council, the NHS and the police take the inter faith group seriously – especially as a source of advice. He said that the group believe it is important to continue to foster good relations as faith communities grow.

Now all of this sounds splendid. But I have sometimes been accused of being unduly optimistic and never seeing the negative aspects. So I decided to do some research on faith communities and discrimination in rural Scotland. I found a publication called *The New Countryside: Ethnicity, Nation and Exclusion in Rural Britain*.<sup>2</sup> Part of the description given of this report says “Ethnic minorities in the Scottish countryside are the victims of repeated racist abuse and prejudice, according to recent research and a controversial new book. *Rural Racism*<sup>3</sup> reveals details of the widespread abuse suffered by families and individuals including excrement shoved through letter boxes, businesses vandalised and children attacked”. Philomena de Lima, the Highland academic who was commissioned to write the book’s Scottish chapter says that the rural areas in Scotland still harbour dangerous stereotypes that have a negative impact on many people’s lives. These racist assumptions remain unchallenged because of the small numbers of ethnic minority people living in rural Scotland. Often abuse and prejudice went unreported because ethnic minorities feel isolated in remote communities.

During the earlier break for conversation this morning, I was speaking with a Muslim friend who said, “We had to move from a rural area into an urban area because of the abuse that my child was suffering at school.” So this is not a myth. When I first lived in Glasgow, I lived in the Pollokshields area and you would never see that kind of abuse. But I know that, for example, in my home town of Elgin, which is quite small, one of the corner shops was constantly having graffiti written on it because it was run by a Muslim family who were probably one of very few Muslim families in the area. You would not dream of doing that in Pollokshields where some 70% of the population are Muslim. There you have much more of a sense of connectedness and community. If you are an isolated family in a rural area, it’s much more frightening. Philomena de Lima said “There is nowhere in

<sup>2</sup> *The New Countryside: Ethnicity, Nation and Exclusion in Rural Britain* Ed Julian Agyeman and Sarah Neil, Policy Press, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Rural Racism*, Ed Neil Chakraborti and John Garland, Willan Publishing, 2004.

Britain quite so remote as the Highlands and that can lead to an extreme sense of social isolation.” Rural racism may be getting worse. She said that the BNP has developed Scottish rural organisers who are deliberately manipulating people’s fears. There is one such group in the Highlands which has been targeting fish factory workers in Ross-shire. She said the majority of people in rural Scotland are welcoming and friendly, but there is a persistent minority who believe immigration has gone too far.

Because I am an optimist and I do not like to finish on a negative note, let me say that having a local inter faith group in an area can be a wonderful support for isolated people. Three or four faith communities in one area joining with others from the mainstream faith traditions can really make a huge difference to their sense of involvement in the community, of being part and parcel of what is happening in it.

I want to tell a story that demonstrates how true this is. I mentioned earlier that I put Inverness in the ‘mixed’ bracket – it is urban but it covers a lot of rural areas as well. There is an Inverness inter faith group. There is an inter faith group on Skye, which like Shetland is an island and fairly isolated. These two groups have an annual picnic together. Last year, I was at the picnic and we were in Whin Park. The group had already laid out all the picnic food when a couple entered the park. The woman was wearing a hijab. So we immediately shouted “It’s over here; the picnic’s over here!” So they came over and joined us in the picnic. They said, “This is the most wonderful event. We are actually from Saudi Arabia and are here on holiday. It is just so fantastic to be invited to join local people for a picnic!” Then the woman said, “And it has restored my faith in Scottish people, because last night we were harassed by a group of young men who had been drinking along the banks of the Ness. They tried to pull my hijab off and it was a really terrifying and disturbing experience for us.” And she said, “We just thought, let us leave here as quickly as we can. But today, coming to this picnic has

completely restored our faith in human relationships and in Scottish people.” Then her husband said, “I work at a university in Saudi Arabia and this has inspired me to go back and see what kind of inter faith work we can get going in Saudi Arabia.” So who would have thought that a tiny little inter faith group in a rural area in the north of Scotland could have such an impact.

Rural inter faith groups are vital and are part of our inter faith landscape and of the landscape of Scotland and of the UK. There are, I am sure, inter faith groups in rural areas in England, Wales and Northern Ireland too also playing an important role.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much for that most interesting presentation.

## There then followed a short question period:

**Monsignor John Devine:** I am from the North West Forum of Faiths. I found your presentation very interesting. One of the steps that regional faith bodies, as hubs, have been asked in the last Government’s policy document, *Face to Face and Side by Side*, to take is to promote local inter faith activity, particularly in areas where there are not groups already. A problem we have encountered is that the ‘early wins’ have already been secured and the gaps on the map of inter faith provision actually reflect the demographics of the region. In other words, there has not been any spontaneous arising of inter faith activity in those areas because the majority of people have either been complacent or not needed it. Do we necessarily have to form local inter faith groups in areas which have less diversity, of the same kind as are found in areas of larger diversity? You have partly answered my question in your presentation, but what other mechanisms are there for raising awareness of diversity, for supporting individual families, rather than diverse communities, and also working in partnership with statutory bodies to help them deliver their duty of care to



those people? Is an inter faith group necessarily the only solution?

**Dr Maureen Sier:** An inter faith group is not the only solution to isolation, and you did mention working with statutory bodies, which have a duty of care towards the minorities in their area. So, for example, most local authorities in Scotland have a diversity forum and the local faith and ethnic communities will be contacted and asked to serve on that forum. But I think there is a unique difference between an inter faith group and a diversity forum. A diversity forum has a kind of governmental and professional feel to it. At a meeting there will be people from the different equality strands, who sit round a table and talk about current issues. In an inter faith group, you are much more likely to build friendships with people who live in your local area, to be invited into their homes, to have picnics with them, to share food with them, to have your children play with each other. I think that something qualitatively different happens in that kind of inter faith context. I know, for example, that the Muslim community in Shetland has said that the local inter faith group has been quite a lifeline for them, because they are invited to community barbecues and musical events and get involved in all kinds of local activities. That does not happen in a local government diversity forum round table discussion. In inter faith events, like the Inverness picnic where the kids were all playing together and where families were sharing food, there is a sense of friendship and community. What we are aiming at is community building – building places where people feel safe, connected, involved and welcome. I think local inter faith groups can do that.

**Monsignor John Devine:** But how can we contrive diversity where it does not exist?

**Dr Maureen Sier:** There are very few areas in Britain where diversity does not exist. So we do not have to contrive diversity. Diversity exists; it is there. There are times when local inter faith groups start up spontaneously. It does concern me what will happen when

funding dries up for regional or national forums for their work, like the support that the Scottish Inter Faith Council has given to local inter faith groups, to women's groups and to youth forums. What kind of support can be given to local inter faith work then? I know, for example, the value of the role that I have with the Scottish Government at the moment, supporting local inter faith groups and starting new groups where there is a gap.

For example, it was the Scottish Inter Faith Council youth development worker, who went to Shetland with the Youth Steering Committee and helped host the conference there which I mentioned. In my role of supporting local inter faith groups I took the two international speakers up there and their presence brought lots of people into the event. Although they do mount smaller low key dialogue events, for events that will attract the larger numbers they are likely to need a certain level of support from a regional or national body. So I do worry what is going to happen if that is no longer there. Local authorities will say that they will give some support, but that is very different from support from a dedicated national inter faith body.

As for starting new inter faith groups, I can think of one in central Scotland. It came about because of a perceived need – and there *was* a need because it has flourished since it got going. At the time I was working for the Scottish Inter Faith Council and we were to have a women's inter faith event which we host annually somewhere in Scotland. I thought of having it in Stirling. There is a local mosque there and I went to it and asked if we could host the event there, where local Muslim women met regularly. They said they would love to do so and that they would cook the food for it. So the meeting was going ahead with everything arranged, when two or three days beforehand, I got a phone call saying, "We are not going to have the meeting. We are pulling out of it." My first thought was, of course, "What have I done wrong? Have I offended someone somehow?" Pramila Kaur, the Chief

Executive of the Scottish Inter Faith Council, and I sat down to discuss what to do. Naturally, my first thought was to go to the mosque to find out what the problem was, and discuss it with the mosque committee. It turned out that it was to do with the fact that at that particular event we were launching a document about community safety in the context of police work on community relations. We were told, "We are boycotting this event because one of our young men has been arrested on terrorism charges and we are very angry that the police are not keeping us informed about what is happening. So we are not boycotting it because of the inter faith dimension, but because we are taking a stance because the police are going to be there." That made me think, "There really does need to be an inter faith group in this area." So I said to the mosque committee, "OK, we will not have the event here, but how would you feel about my hosting a public inter faith event in the mosque and inviting all the faith communities to come and look at the possibility of starting an inter faith group here?" They said, "Yes, we would be comfortable with that. That would be fine." About 50 people came to the event at the mosque, and at that meeting, I said, "Of the 50 of you here, how many of you would like to form a steering committee to take the work of inter faith in this area forward?" Enough volunteers from the different communities came forward and it evolved from there. Now they have a constitution and charitable status, have held a number of events and have moved forward. At that time I perceived the need for the group but I do wonder how it will be without funding and without external support.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much indeed.

## Inter-faith Activities in Rural Scotland

Dr Maureen Sier

### Scottish Context

#### 15 local inter-faith groups

- Urban
  - Glasgow (2 groups)
  - Edinburgh (2 groups)
  - Dundee
  - Aberdeen
- Rural
  - Skye
  - Shetland
  - Orkney
  - Dumfries and Galloway
- Mixed
  - Central Scotland
  - Inverness
  - Fife
  - Moray
  - East Renfrewshire



### Focus Shetland

#### Shetland

- Population: 21,800
- 20% under 16
- 1.1% Ethnic Minority
- Scottish average (2%)



### The People

Over the last five to six thousand years, **Shetland** has become home to successive waves of **immigrants**

- Pictish, Norse and Scots (historically)
- Of today's inhabitants, roughly **a third** were born outside the islands and a wide range of nationalities are represented.
- The islands have always welcomed temporary visitors
- All of this makes for a community that's generally tolerant, welcoming and vibrant.



## Eight schools in Global Classroom Program



## Activities

Recent activities include:

- Words of Inspiration (each faith offering scripture and comment)
- Schools Conference during Scottish Inter faith week involving 4 Secondary schools
- Talk given to Shetland Rotary Club
- An Inter Faith Burn's Supper
- A variety Family Concert to raise funds for a local charity and for the group

## Faith and Belief

**Shetland** is home to people of many faiths and of none. The islands have no tradition of **religious extremes or religious intolerance**

Unlike some parts of Scotland, you will find little overt display of religion and no attempt by one group to impose a particular lifestyle on any other.

The largest faith group is Christian and **several strands**, including Presbyterian, Anglican and Roman Catholic are represented. However, there are followers of **most world faiths** including Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Bahá'í and Buddhism. Other approaches and philosophies, for example Paganism and Humanism, have adherents too.

## Challenges and Impact

Majority don't necessarily see the need for an inter-faith group as there are no serious incidents regarding 'Faith' in Shetland. No antagonism towards inter-faith group perhaps just a little apathy.

Impact

- Improved community relations
- Events well received and attended
- People generally accept the objectives of the group and agree that this kind of activity in relationship building is a good idea.
- Excellent feedback from the schools events in particular and this is important for the future
- Shetland Island Council, NHS, Police etc. take the inter-faith group seriously especially for policy advice

As faith communities grow the group believe it is important to continue to foster good relations



## The Inter-faith Group



The Aims of SIF

- To work together as people of faith for a just and inclusive Shetland
- To help build and maintain good relations and greater understanding between different communities of faith and belief
- To encourage the sharing of knowledge and understanding of faith and belief among the people of Shetland.



## and a story (Inverness and Skye)



## and.....

- To provide a forum for discussion on faith issues of mutual concern.
- To support, within a faith context, the integration of ethnic minorities into Shetland society
- To act as a body for consultation by statutory and other bodies who are seeking the views of people of the different faiths in Shetland.



# National faith communities: supporting and encouraging local inter faith work

## Maulana M Shahid Raza OBE

*Chair, Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB)*

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Maulana Shahid Raza is now going to help us to reflect on the role of national faith communities in local inter faith work. He is the Chair of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board. Thank you very much for coming to speak to us.

**Maulana Shahid Raza:** In the name of God, the most merciful, the most kind. Before I say a few words about the creation of MINAB and its role within the Muslim community, I would like to share with you how strongly we, within MINAB, believe that it is important for national faith communities and their organisations to play a role in the encouragement of local inter faith activities. Since the creation of the Inter Faith Network, many of our colleagues have been raising their concern that inter faith dialogue, whether deliberately or by chance, may go in a different direction and become just a kind of club for like-minded inter faith oriented individuals. In my humble opinion, that concern is still there. I know that all of us who are here take this exercise of inter faith action to the grass roots level and in that context national faith community organisations have a very crucial role to play. An organisation like MINAB, which is an umbrella organisation of mosques and educational institutions, having first hand contact with them, can certainly help to make this inter faith exercise a great success, with its benefits shared widely at local level throughout the country.

Many of us engage in local inter faith activity

in a personal capacity, and this is to be highly appreciated. But the danger is that if one particular individual from one community migrates elsewhere, the engagement of the community he or she is representing also migrates with him or with her. To make this involvement at local level more consistent and more structured, we need the involvement and support of national faith organisations. This may also help to make this local interaction more inclusive. Like all other faith communities, Muslims have various denominations and various theological and ideological backgrounds. There can be a risk that maybe one particular mosque representing one particular ideological background is involved in inter faith activity – which is praiseworthy and always appreciated – but not others. To create a more inclusive involvement the role of the national faith communities and their organisations can be very helpful.

I cannot speak on behalf of other faith communities, but within Muslim communities there have always been some who look at this inter faith exercise suspiciously. “Why are you going to a synagogue? Why are Christians, Hindus or Sikhs being welcomed in a mosque?” We need the full involvement of our national faith community organisations, to help our individual Muslims, or our small local groups, understand that the purpose of inter faith dialogue is understanding each other, respecting each other and, through this exercise, helping to create a more cohesive

and peaceful civil society. Through our national involvement we can also make this local inter faith engagement from the Muslim community more effective, by providing resources, support and training.

One of the most important steps that could foster the local involvement of our communities in inter faith dialogue is to bring together the benefits and achievements of inter faith work. A question being asked almost every month, everywhere on every occasion is “What are the dividends of this inter faith dialogue?” If national organisations are involved, they can bring together all the local achievements and benefits so that these can be shared by the whole community whether nationally or at regional level.

MINAB is fully committed to providing this sort of support. What is MINAB? It is the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board. It was established in June 2006, primarily by four national Muslim organisations: Al-Khoei Foundation, British Muslim Forum, Muslim Association of Britain, and Muslim Council of Britain. Together these four organisations represent over 1,000 mosques and Muslim organisations within the United Kingdom. MINAB is non-sectarian, covering Sunnis and Shi’as – Sufis, Salafis, those following the Deobandi or Barelwi schools of thought or Al-Hadith or UK Islamic Mission, and different Shi’a groups. They are all represented within MINAB. In order to keep this structure intact, MINAB has a narrow remit, with its constitution providing that it has no role in matters of theology.

The first MINAB elections were held last year in Birmingham. Over 1,200 delegates from these mosques and Islamic institutions, elected an Executive Board of 50 members. 20% of seats on this are reserved for women and 20% of seats are reserved for the Shi’a community. I believe that in the history of the Muslims in the United Kingdom it is a record that 600 mosques and organisations are supporting one single national umbrella organisation.

What will MINAB do for the community? The first of its objectives is capacity building of mosques, by offering skills development programmes for imams; assisting mosques in matters of governance; encouraging mosques to increase the level of participation of youth and of women in mosque activities; and the promotion of civic responsibility.

What do we mean within MINAB by ‘promoting civic responsibility’ within our mosque communities? We have already started work to promote the importance of living in peace with other communities and to explore what this means in practice. We ensure that inter faith activities are taking place to engage with other local communities and we encourage participation in citizenship courses held by MINAB for the Muslim community. As involving local Muslim communities in inter faith dialogue is one of its main objectives, MINAB has established a specialist committee working for that purpose. It is preparing a handbook providing information on inter faith dialogue and demonstrating its validity in terms of Islamic theological teachings and its benefits for the Muslim community. This booklet will also tackle criticisms of, and suspicions and confusions about, inter faith dialogue. We are planning during this year to hold five workshops up and down the country for the training of our imams and at least twenty imams will be requested to attend each of them. So through these workshops we plan to offer some fundamental training in respect of inter faith dialogue to around a hundred imams. During these workshops, we will be receiving feedback from our imams and that will help us to provide them with improved models for inter faith dialogue.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much for that masterly exposition of the general principles of the relationship between national and local working and also for providing a very interesting and challenging model of how to develop understanding of inter faith issues within your own faith community.



**Anil Mitra:** I am from Hillingdon Inter Faith Network. I have got a worry and a concern. We may be faithful or unfaithful (I do not, incidentally, know how the word 'faith' came to be used over here). Some people have not got faith in 'inter faith'. If some faiths cannot look after their own housekeeping in regard to this, how can they contribute, globally, nationally, or regionally, not to speak of locally, towards this inter faith work or to this Network?

**Maulana Shahid Raza:** Historically, Muslims have lived alongside many faith communities for the last fourteen hundred years all over the world. So Muslims have a great deal of experience in how to live with Jews and Christians in the Middle East or in the Indian sub-continent with our Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist neighbours. So I hope you will wait and see how MINAB delivers on what it plans to do.

**Christa Rennie (Milton Keynes Interfaith Group):** We have quite a diverse community in Milton Keynes, including a very diverse Muslim community. I hear from our Muslim members that there is a great deal of miscommunication and misunderstanding within this and of not working together. You describe MINAB's programmes, which should be supported by all. How does MINAB plan to reach out to the various mosques and to engage with the leaders and the imams, all over, across the various regions?

**Maulana Shahid Raza:** As I have said, MINAB is an organisation to which over 600 mosques are affiliated, so we have direct contact with these mosques, including in Milton Keynes. We also work very closely with regional and local councils of mosques. Through them, we will be approaching individual mosques and will try our best to ensure that we help them effectively and encourage and support them in resolving some of their local issues and differences.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you very much indeed.



## National Faith Communities supporting and encouraging local Inter-Faith work

by

**Moulana Shahid Raza**

## Why it is so important?

- Encourage inter-faith Dialogue at gross root level
- Dialogue within local Faith Communities becomes "Structured", "Inclusive" and "Consistent"
- Internal understanding / Home work for such dialogues
- Support, resources, training
- Networking and reporting the outcome / achievements



## What is MINAB?

- Established in 2006
- Non-sectarian in its outlook
- No role in matters of Theology
- 1<sup>st</sup> elections held in May, 2010
- Over 600 mosques and institutions affiliated with MINAB

## What will the MINAB do?

- Capacity Building of mosques
- Assisting mosques in matters of governance
- Participation of Youth
- Participation of Women
- Promotion of Civic Responsibility

CONNECTIVITY-RESPECT-EMPOWER

## **Promotion Of Civic Responsibility**

- Events to discuss, explore and to promote the importance of living in peace with others in a culturally diverse society
- There are inter-faith activities taking place with local communities
- There are Islamic Awareness programmes available locally
- Encourage and participate in citizenship courses

## **Programme to be Developed**

- Handbook providing information on Inter-Faith dialogue
  - Validity
  - Benefits
  - Criticism /suspicion/confusion
- Five regional workshops / 20 Imams
- During the current year, 100 Imams, engaged in this scheme
- Getting the feedback
- Develop Improved models for Inter-Faith dialogue

# Inter Faith Week

## **Stella Opoku-Owusu and Elin Henrysson** *Inter Faith Network for the UK*

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** We are now going to move to our last agenda item before lunch. This is about Inter Faith Week, which as you know was very successful last autumn and is due to happen again this autumn, with the Inter Faith Network leading on this. Copies of the report on last year's Week in England are available and Revd Alan Bayes, who is Chair of the Inter Faith Council for Wales, has brought copies of the report on the Week there. So do use both of these resources to check on ideas and resources for this year's Week. Now Stella Opoku-Owusu and Elin Henrysson from the Network office are going to make a presentation about the Week and then we shall hear a case study from Kirklees Faiths Forum.

**Stella Opoku-Owusu:** Thank you, Bishop Alastair. I am the Regional and Local Inter Faith Officer for the Inter Faith Network, and this is my colleague, Elin Henrysson, who is our Project Assistant. She and I will be taking you on a short journey through Inter Faith Week 2009.

In line with today's theme, 'Shaping our shared society – the key role of local inter faith organisations', this presentation will focus on the role played by local inter faith organisations in the course of the Week. I will give you a quick snapshot of the Week, including its aims, the nature of the events that took place and, highlighting the significant role played by local inter faith organisations. I will also show you how local inter faith work was profiled through the national launch event, through the work of the English Regional Faith Forums, and will give some examples of local profiling by the media. Elin will then take you through images

from several events that took place at a local level during the Week and we hope to leave you with some inspiring ideas for 2010.

We do not have a lot of time so I will not be able to cover everything. However, you will find a lot of information on Inter Faith Week 2009 in the report mentioned by Bishop Alastair: *Inter Faith Week 2009: A Report and Evaluation*. This can be downloaded from the Inter Faith Week website: [www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk)

Inter Faith Week 2009 took place from 15 – 21 November. It was facilitated in partnership by IFN UK and the Department for Communities and Local Government. Its aims were to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels; increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK; and increase understanding between faiths and the wider society. At least 350 events were organised all over England and Wales, over 300 of which were held locally. National faith communities, national inter faith organisations, regional faith forums and educational and academic organisations were all involved in organising significant events. Local inter faith organisations – multilateral, bilateral and trilateral – played a significant role during the Week, with over a hundred of them organising events. Events were also held by other institutions such as places of worship, local authorities and schools.

As I mentioned in my introduction, the work of local inter faith organisations as well as local Inter Faith Week events was profiled in a variety of ways. There were three particularly strong forms of profiling: the National Inter Faith Week launch event, the listing and

showcasing by the Regional Faith Forums, and the coverage by local media.

The national Inter Faith Week launch in London on 12 November had on display 60 exhibition stands on inter faith activity and faith and social action. Included in the exhibition was an extensive display on local inter faith work prepared by IFN UK. This showed images of activities generally carried out by local inter faith organisations across the UK, and it also showcased a selection of Inter Faith Week events across England and Wales. At the back of the room you will see that display. We also have some display material upstairs in the River Room and the Court Room which you will see later on during your lunch break.



Regional Faith Forums also displayed at the launch images of local inter faith work in their own regions. The Community Development Foundation, which is responsible for administering the Faiths in Action Fund, also exhibited at the launch, including information about the work of local inter faith organisations that had received support from the Fund. So between these three exhibitions of IFN, the Regional Faith Forums and CDF, it was ensured that there was a varied and wide range of local inter faith activities on display at the launch, cutting across all the regions and covering several themes.



Across England, the nine English Regional Faith Forums celebrated Inter Faith Week with a combination of high profile region-wide and sub-regional events and played a significant role in profiling and supporting the local Inter Faith Week events in their specific regions. They acted as sources of information in their respective areas by listing local events on their websites. Some of them also used this as a platform to raise awareness of the regional support infrastructure available to local inter faith groups.

Turning to the media, local Inter Faith Week events received significant coverage, notably from the local radio, such as the BBC in Coventry and Warwickshire, and Three Counties Radio, as well as local press, community newspapers, faith press and county gazettes, and regional TV news. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter were also important.

As well, the Inter Faith Network's publication *Inter Faith Week 2009: A Report and Evaluation* carried information about many local events and it has been very widely circulated, including to faith communities and Government.

Elin will now take you through images of Inter Faith Week, highlighting some events organised by local inter faith organisations.

**Elin Henrysson:** Thank you, Stella. I will be giving you a photographic snapshot of the local events that took place during Inter Faith Week. As Stella mentioned, the vast majority

of events that took place during Inter Faith Week were organised at a local level. I will only have time to mention a few of these, but you can refer to the report and the 2009 Inter Faith Week list of events that will soon be made available on our website for a more comprehensive overview.

The local events that took place during Inter Faith Week fell into a range of broad themes, and I will show you images from a few of these.

Many local inter faith organisations arranged opportunities for people to engage in dialogue. For example, Southwark Multi Faith Forum held an event called 'More Tea, Imam, Vicar, Rabbi?' where young people were given the opportunity to discuss faith with each other and with faith leaders and Wycombe Sharing of Faiths organised a 'Living Library' where people were able to 'borrow' a person from a different faith to ask them questions about their beliefs.

### Dialogue

- An event called 'More Tea Vicar/Imam/Rabbi?' organised by Southwark Multi Faith Forum where young people had the opportunity to discuss faith with each other and with faith leaders
- A Living Library event, organised by Wycombe Sharing of Faiths, where people could "borrow" a person of faith to ask them questions about their beliefs.



Another popular activity was exhibitions for the wider public to come and learn about different faiths and beliefs. For example, Stockport Inter Faith Network organised a celebration and exhibition on the theme of faith headwear, which was held at the Hat Works Museum, and Leicester Council of Faiths put together a display describing the key beliefs of eight faiths which they exhibited at the High Cross Shopping Centre throughout the Week.

### Exhibitions

- A celebration and exhibition on the theme of faith head wear was held at the Hatworks Museum and organised by Stockport Inter Faith Network.
- An exhibition put together by Leicester Council of Faiths and displayed at High Cross Shopping Centre throughout the Week.



Several groups also organised 'faith walks', giving people a chance to visit places of worship in their home town. Here are some images from the 'faith walks' organised by Hull and East Riding Inter Faith and Watford Inter Faith Association.

### Faith Walks

- An inter faith walk held by Hull and East Riding Interfaith
- A meal at a Gurdwara during Watford Inter Faith Association's Faith Trail.




Many groups focused their events around music. For example, Slough Faith Partnership put together an event called 'Sikhs in the Square' which included a series of dramatic and musical performances in the town square.



## Music

- An event called "Sikhs in the Square" – a series of musical and dramatic performances to highlight Sikh faith and traditions. Organised by Slough Faith Partnership.



Local places of worship all over England and Wales opened their doors to visitors during the Week. For example, Bristol Multi Faith Forum held a diverse 'Open Doors' day and the Newcastle Branch of the Council of Christians and Jews organised an open day at the United Hebrew Congregation.

Several local inter faith organisations produced resources that were launched during the Week. For example, Luton Council of Faiths launched a 'Faith Map'.

## Resources

- A Faith Map Launch by Luton Council of Faiths



Some local inter faith groups chose to engage schools in their Inter Faith Week event. For example, Torbay Inter Faith Forum for Youth brought together representatives from several secondary schools across Torbay to play 'The Diversity Game'.

## Schools

- Representatives from secondary schools from across Torbay play the Diversity Game. Organised by Torbay Inter-Faith Forum 4 Youth.



Many local groups organised events that were social action focused. For example, Wolverhampton Faith and Regeneration Network organised a conference on climate change. Northampton Inter Faith Forum held a combined Inter Faith Week and Mitzvah Day event where the participants helped clean up and renovate the Broughton Mencap Centre.

## Social Action

- A conference on climate change organised by Wolverhampton Faith and Regeneration Network

- A combined Inter Faith Week/ Mitzvah Day event organized by Northampton Inter Faith Forum where participants helped clean up and renovate the Broughton Mencap Centre.



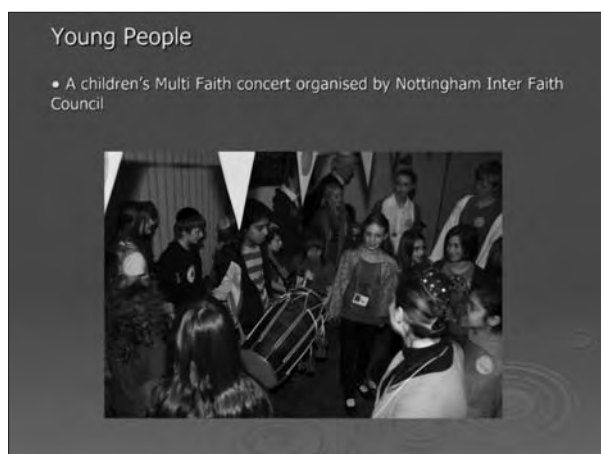
Sports activities were quite a popular scheme for the Week. This is a photograph from an inter faith football match organised by Nottingham Inter Faith Council.



Some local events were specifically focused on women. St Philip's Centre, for example, held a Women's Multi Faith work event.



Finally, many local inter faith organisations chose to organise events directed towards young people. For example, Nottingham Inter Faith Council held a multi-faith children's concert.



There were also many other types of events

during the Week and you can read about these in the Report.

Many local inter faith groups produced leaflets to publicise their events and these are some examples from Hertsmere Forum of Faiths, Harrow Inter Faith Council, Bristol Inter Faith Group and Burnley and Pendle Faith Centre.



Most of the media coverage during the week was at a local level. Here are examples from the Nottingham Evening Post on the children's concert as well as a BBC article covering the Inter Faith Week launch event organised by Leicestershire Forum of Faiths.



I hope you have been inspired by this snapshot of what took place during Inter Faith Week last year. Stella will now tell you a little bit more about Inter Faith Week 2010.

**Stella Opoku-Owusu:** Thanks, Elin. Inter Faith Week 2010 will be from 21 to 27 November.

Many of you are already planning your Inter Faith Week activities. Elin and I have put together a few key points arising out of Inter Faith Week 2009 which may be useful in planning your events.

Firstly, support. Last year's Week saw support of all sorts. Items donated included venues and resources; organisations' staff time; volunteers' time; and food. Many organisations got involved, from faith communities to schools, libraries, the police, community fire stations and so on. Some financial support came from central Government and from local authorities, from the local faith communities and from trusts and foundations.

Secondly, publicity. Ideas from the evaluation included publicising events in spaces such as libraries, shopping centres, tourist information centres and corner shops. Remembering to make good use of advance news releases was also flagged up.

Thirdly, event ideas. Just a few of the ideas suggested include:

- Shifting a regular yearly event so that it happens during Inter Faith Week to take advantage of the national profiling of Inter Faith Week.
- Where there are exhibitions, try to keep these open for the whole Week so that the broadest possible audience can be reached.
- Working in partnership with other local groups or with your local authority – this way you can pool limited resources together.
- Putting on a 'living library' event at the local library or at a community centre: these can be particularly good for encouraging religious and non-religious dialogue.

Finally I will leave you with a list of resources which I hope you will find helpful. The report

*Inter Faith Week 2009: A Report and Evaluation* has already been mentioned, as has the list of events which took place in 2009. The report is available on the Inter Faith Week website at [www.interfaithweek.org.uk](http://www.interfaithweek.org.uk) and the list of 2009 events will be available on the website shortly. And also do not forget to speak with your Regional Faith Forums. They may have other resources available for local groups in their regions.

I hope you have found this brief presentation enjoyable and useful and if you have any questions later, we will be happy to take them.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you both very much.

# Inter Faith Week

## Fakhara Rehman

*Community Faiths Coordinator, Kirklees Faiths Forum*

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Fakhara Rehman is now going to present a case study on Inter Faith Week in Kirklees.

**Fakhara Rehman:** I would like to start by thanking the Inter Faith Network for inviting me here today. I would like to tell you about some of our Inter Faith Week activities in Kirklees.

Kirklees is a positively strange place! I say 'positively strange' because Kirklees is split into two distinct regions. We have North Kirklees and South Kirklees. North Kirklees has two main faith communities residing there, the Muslim community and the Christian community. There are other smaller faith communities there as well, but they do not have places of worship. South Kirklees is much more diverse. There are Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian and Buddhist communities all with places of worship. There is also a small Jewish community which does not have a synagogue.

Very soon after I joined Kirklees Faiths Forum in March last year, the Treasures Revealed festival took place in May. So we were very busy with a whole week of various events, with faith centres opening their doors. After that finished we began to plan for our Inter Faith Week programme. It was rather hectic as I was still finding my feet and getting to know people. I will mention later the lessons that we learned, but I would like to say at the outset that you cannot start your planning early enough. Straight after the Inter Faith Week last year, we started planning this year's – before it had even been announced whether there was going to be an Inter Faith Week nationally or not. We decided it was too

important an initiative to drop.

So what did we do last November? We decided that the most important aspect of the Week was to celebrate our diversity through various events and activities and, through that celebration, to develop better understanding of the faiths in Kirklees.

Kirklees Faiths Forum works very closely with Interfaith Kirklees Schools, our sister organisation, which arranges visits for schoolchildren, in line with the RE syllabus, to the Faith Centre in Kirklees. Last year we had over 200 schools taking part in the visits. Generally it is 30 students per visit, which means that more than 6,000 pupils went through the various places of worship. We broadened that programme through the Kirklees Faiths Forum to open the doors to parents and to community groups. In Inter Faith Week we ensured that all the Faith Centres were open throughout the week, to make sure that we could maximise the opportunities not only for schools but for adults as well. We also ran 'Hands on Faith' workshops, to give everyone the opportunity to experience a practical aspect of faith. People are sometimes intrigued by faith but often feel intimidated by it and by religious festivals and rituals. We wanted people to not only see for themselves but to have the opportunity to experience by getting involved. Lastly, we did some sharing of good practice through collaborative work, not only with statutory organisations but also between different faith communities. Some of our Faith Centres did some joint work. So in brief, our activities were about positive engagement, with interactive faith workshops, dialogue and discussion.

One of our churches held an inter faith quiz night. We found that everybody was very competitive – not least the Bishop of Pontefract, who is the Chair of Kirklees Faiths Forum! It was a fantastic success and was an inter-generational activity for families. We also had a ‘Faith and Food’ event where we provided a menu for conversation. And finally we launched a ‘pledge a pound’ initiative, I will now share a little more detail about all of the above.

I mentioned the Faith Centres, which opened their doors during the Week and went the extra mile to welcome visitors and interact with them to provide the best and most positive experience for everyone. We wanted it to be a chance to learn from experts in the religion, alongside facilitators who were not from that religion. With the adult groups, we posed some challenging questions and did not shy away from addressing some of the more controversial issues such as the ‘niqab’, the Muslim veil. We had some people agreeing with each other, some disagreeing, and others holding a whole range of views in between. It gave participants the sense of faith being very much a personal journey, and that we can all have our opinions, with agreements and disagreements and still respect each other. The fact that these interactive ‘faith sharing experiences’ took place within the Faith Centre environment made people more at ease, more sensitive both to the sacredness of the place that we were in, but also more respectful of each other’s faiths. The adult learning packages were equally successful with participants of no religious faith.

The ‘Hands on Faith’ workshops were an opportunity to strengthen the engagement of particular faith communities. The different faiths were invited to share any aspect of their faith with the wider community in a fun way. For example, there was a Jewish bread making workshop, in which a member of the Jewish community explained the story behind challah, the plaited bread eaten on the Jewish Sabbath, everyone joined in and we had the Bishop of Pontefract having a go and being

very competitive once again!

Sikh sword fighting really was as scary as it sounds and looked, but lots of fun! One of the groups that signed up for this particular workshop were some young people designated ‘NEET’, which is ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’. We had to ensure we had our risk assessments in place for this! But it was really fantastic, because we managed to get rid of certain prejudices that some of the young people had – subtle prejudices – and sometimes very direct ones, as well. We had the full spectrum of people and opinions, but through this engagement, and their learning about the faith in an interactive way, there was lots of fun and learning at the same time.

Music as a form of worship was explored from the Hindu and Christian faiths. We had Hindu devotional music and prayers and participants had the opportunity to play the instruments and learn about what music meant within that faith. We had Muslim pupils from a local high school joining in with adults for the Gospel singing. The singers were from a black majority Seventh Day Adventist church, and though initially, it took some time to get the pupils to join in, by the end, everyone was singing!

For the final workshop, to bring some calm and some inner peace, we had meditation from the Vajrapani Buddhist Centre.

The dialogue and discussion events I mentioned earlier took two different forms. One of them was to facilitate collaborative working. We had a dialogue session in St Thomas’s Church in Huddersfield, South Kirklees, where an imam and a priest gave a very brief overview of their religion and then there was an opportunity to ask questions. The session began with food, a great way to get everybody to just relax and feel able to make friendships and also to ask each other questions informally. The best outcome for us was that because of the relationships that were built at this event, members of the church and the mosque congregations built



some firm and lasting friendships and started a series of meetings called 'Ask the Imam' and 'Ask the Priest'. So they now have regular meetings where the Christian and Muslim congregations talk about issues of common concern in a friendly environment. This year, as a result of the success of the initiative, we will be launching a programme called 'Faith Twinning' where we are going to try to link more churches and mosques and other places of worship.

The second part of our dialogue events was inspired by an idea from the Bradford Faiths Forum – which as you heard in the previous presentation is called 'Faith in the City'. We began our series of 'Focus on Faith' seminars in Inter Faith Week last year and this series has continued, with prominent speakers from the various faith communities coming to talk to the audience.

At the Kirklees Faith Forum AGM we wanted to add some spice to the business meeting so chose for it to take place in a lovely restaurant setting, but also gave everyone work to do over a 'menu of conversation'. Attendees were served their starter, and then asked questions – easy ones at first such as 'What is the purpose of inter faith?' But the questions gradually got harder as we approached the dessert! People were asked to discuss the questions with those who were seated with them. The official business took less than half an hour, and the rest of it was all about relationship building.

There are lots of people who want to take part in discussion and in dialogue but do not feel able to do so, because they do not see themselves as part of 'the system'. Maureen Sier mentioned earlier the 'professionalising' of inter faith activity. I am for ever complaining to our local authority that faith communities are only used by them as a resource in times of crisis or tension when they need to help bring calm to a community. But that is not what faith communities are about day in day out. They contribute immensely both to the economy and to the society in which we live. So we need to make

sure that they have a voice. Whether it is in terms of one-off events or longer projects, we have to think about sustainability and encouraging an ongoing relationship. So from the 'menu of conversation' the feedback was "That was great, but we did not have enough time. We wanted to discuss this further". So we have established 'Friendship through Faith' groups, which focus on dialogue and discussion at a deeper level.

The last activity I need to share with everyone is our 'Pledge a Pound' initiative. I have said faith communities contribute greatly to the communities in which they live. In just one day we managed to raise over £7,000 for charity, mainly from the mosques and the churches. The reason why it was such a success was because we did not ask people to do a sponsored activity. We requested people just join in whether this was by fasting and pledging their pound(s) or by just pledging their pounds! The important bit was supporting the cause. Because of its success, this is another activity we will be repeating this year. We are still in the process of coming up with ideas as to how we are going to try and collect the money this time.

What are the lessons learned from last year's Inter Faith Week? For us, the most important aim was to make faith fun, accessible and to be innovative. We have got so many skills and resources, hidden gems in our communities – let us find them, and engage them for the benefit of all of us. And make sure that we are inclusive. It is crucial that we involve the youth as well – and not just through the Faith Centres. This year we are going to be working with the local youth SACRE to optimise existing structures that are in place.

The timing of events must be appropriate and the venue is critical. We made sure that the workshops took place both during the day and in the evening, in order to maximise the number of people that could take part in them. We made sure that they were in accessible venues with parking, for example. Events need to be welcoming, you have got to have people with smiles on their faces! It is

amazing to see how people, on entering an unfamiliar place of worship are incredibly nervous, so much so that they are holding their shoes, and although there are shoe racks there in front of them, they do not have the confidence to put their shoes into them because they do not want to do something that may inadvertently offend. We are a nation where we do not want to ask questions of other people. But if we do not ask questions, we are never going to find out the answers. So we must encourage questions, we must encourage dialogue and sharing of information.

And finally, marketing and publicity are important too. The media coverage has to be consistent and ongoing – before the event, during the event, and after the event. The media were particularly keen on projects like ‘Pledge a Pound’ because that was about giving a benefit back to the community.

I talked at the beginning about inter faith work involving celebration. But it is also about education, because, as Maureen said, there is a lot of prejudice and discrimination out there and we are living in a global community. What happens on the other side of the world has an impact on us here and we all have a duty of care to each other. I hope my presentation has inspired you with some ideas for your Inter Faith Week activities. Thank you

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** Thank you for that splendid presentation. You have given us much food for thought in many ways.



### Our Aims for Inter Faith Week

- To celebrate the diversity of faiths in Kirklees
- To develop understanding of faiths in Kirklees
- To open up our religious and spiritual spaces for the whole community
- To enable opportunities for the wider community to experience ‘hands on faith’ via interactive faith workshops
- To share experiences and good practice through collaborative work

### The Activities:

- Positive engagement between faith communities and non faith communities
- Interactive faith workshops
- Interfaith dialogue and discussion
- Interfaith Quiz Night
- Faith and Food - A Menu of Conversation
- Pledge a Pound - Faiths in Action!



Faith centre visits



## Interactive Faith Workshops



Hindu devotional music  
and prayer singing



Jewish bread (challah) baking



Gospel singing  
with members  
of a black  
majority  
church



Hebrew writing



Buddhist  
meditation



Sikh sword  
fighting



## Dialogue and Discussion

## A Brief Understanding Of Christianity & Islam



## Things to Remember

- Innovative, exciting and inclusive activities.
- Timing must be appropriate, venue is critical, the atmosphere must be welcoming, activities need to be interactive and/or inviting audience participation in the form of dialogue for example.
- Marketing/publicity – timing is everything!



Faith and Spirituality: An evening of inspiration

Kirklees **Faiths** Forum

**Thank You**



Kirklees Faiths Forum AGM – an interfaith meal with a menu of conversation

## Menu of Conversation

### *Starter*

*What is the purpose of inter faith?*

*'Society is a conversation with many voices'*

*What do you think the Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sachs meant by this?*

### *Main Course*

*'That which unites us is greater than that which divides us'*

*Do you agree?*

*'Equal does not mean the same'*

*Should we be moving from tolerance towards respecting difference?*

### *Dessert*

*You've got one life. How are you going to live it?*

*Discuss your thoughts with your neighbour.*

*Mahatma Ghandi said,*

*'Be the change you want to see in the world'*

*What change do you want to be?*

# Sustaining the vision: resources and structures

**Anna Allen**

*Head of Programmes, Community Development Foundation*

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Welcome back to the afternoon session. I am sorry that I was delayed in my arrival here today and I'm delighted to be with you.

We now have Anna Allen to talk to us on "Sustaining the vision: Resources and structures". Ms Allen is the Head of Programmes at the Community Development Foundation. She will talk about how recent funding programmes have been helping support local inter faith initiatives and reflect on some of the challenges of developing and sustaining patterns of funding which can help underpin their work well. She and her team have worked closely with the Inter Faith Network in the context of the work which they have carried out to administer CLG's Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and its Faiths in Action programme.

**Anna Allen:** As Dr Bhan has said, I am Head of Programmes at the Community Development Foundation with responsibility for faith and cohesion and race equality. In my presentation, I would like to share some reflections with you on our work supporting local inter faith projects in England. I will take you through the past, introducing CDF and our experience; describe to you the present, in terms of the achievements of the inter faith groups that we fund; and take you a little to the future, sharing some ideas on creating sustainable funding and structures.

2005 was a very significant year for the Community Development Foundation. It

marked the beginning of our direct involvement, as a grant-making body, with faith and inter faith organisations in the UK. Since then, we have been managing grant programmes on behalf of Communities and Local Government, with a specific focus on supporting faith and inter faith communities. We have been privileged, through these programmes, to support and fund well over 1,300 faith and inter faith organisations in England and in Wales as well. Over the past few years we have delivered a range of small and large grants to national, regional and local bodies across the country and have been very pleased to have had this unique opportunity to be working with them.

Running these programmes has been a stimulating experience. They require a lot of good teamwork and offer interesting challenges. We have received well over 4,000 applications and have had to carry out around 12,000 assessments in order to process these applications and give out grants. CLG's current grant programme, 'Faiths in Action', supports dialogue and social action initiatives in local communities across England which increase understanding between people of faith and of no faith, and contribute to better community relations. Since 2008, 329 organisations have received funding through this programme. Almost half of these are inter faith projects. There is no other organisation like CDF, with a similar kind of experience and our quite distinct position gives us some unique knowledge and learning that I would like to share with you today.

Through 'Faiths in Action' we have reached very small, grassroots community based inter faith projects. Half of the funded groups operate within just one single local authority area and 14% of them work within just a 20 minute walk from their offices. So they are small local organisations. Some of them have charity status, and some do not. We have also funded a lot of newly established small community groups. Our application process is easy enough for inexperienced organisations to apply for funding and to be successful in receiving grants. Almost a quarter of our funded groups were quite inexperienced in the grant application process before they applied to us, but they were successful.

'Faiths in Action' is now in its second year of operation, and we have been working with a lot of interesting organisations, including inter faith groups, for almost a year. What do we know about them now? What have we learned?

We have learned that small inter faith projects are vibrant, innovative and very smart – full of very good ideas. The inventiveness and creativity of these projects is very inspiring for our staff. They manage to engage creatively with people, and as a result, very productively as well, with long-lasting benefits. One of our funded projects is a Peace Garden project in Weymouth. This slide shows a group of volunteers that have been participating in this activity and what they've said about the value of the work.



Faith is sometimes described as being sensitive and difficult for people to talk about but our funded projects manage to break down those barriers through providing structures and space for comfortable and safe communication between people in their communities. I will come back to this Weymouth project, because these people have a lot to say about volunteering and its value.

Let us have a look at those projects that we have funded and the value of their work. We have learned that these small, grassroots inter faith organisations are managing to reach different levels, different layers, different communities in their local area, and to make a small grant go a very long way. Projects funded in Round 1 of Faiths in Action are reaching over one million people across a hundred cities and towns in this country. And it's not only about how many people they reach, it's also about who they reach. Nearly half of our projects benefited people on low incomes – 45% of projects benefited unemployed people, 40% elderly people and 38% people with disabilities. So these projects are reaching out to those who are in need. On average, 306 people have already benefitted from each of these small, grass-roots projects<sup>1</sup>.

This is not all. These projects are also successful at reaching out to women and young people – two groups which might in the past have experienced some barriers to participating in inter faith activities. 67% of groups reached out to new groups of people that they had never worked with before they had their grant, and 74% say that they are now better equipped to influence local decision-making on faith issues. Behind this last figure are people like the young person from Broxtowe who, after participating in a local Faiths in Action funded community celebration event, went on to sign up as a representative in the local Youth Parliament structure. Some other projects managed to influence local decision makers on faith issues

<sup>1</sup> See *Faiths in Action Interim Evaluation Report* by Daniel Pearman with Areenay Hatamian (<http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/publication?id=334473>)



through linking really well with the networks of faith leaders and some others have done so through local service providers. So there are a number of ways in which participants in these projects are getting around and making their opinions known.

A comment on networking and collaboration. Networking is a strength of inter faith work and local inter faith projects can benefit from it a lot. It offers quite a big potential to them and they are becoming more aware of the benefits of it. As one member of a funded group said, describing these benefits: “It is about being affirmed, valued by the Regional Faith Forum, linking into wider networks, capacity building, advice, support and signposting, ‘paternal affinity’ and a feeling that we are not on our own” This is incredibly important, is it not?

We have noticed over the last two years that more active cooperation is taking place within local inter faith networks. We see more partnership applications, more joint work, more cooperation going on between these projects, which is really important. One of our funded projects talked to us about the common ground for joint work “Whilst we express our faiths in different ways, we care about the same things”.

Reaching different parts of the local communities and working with people with no religious faith, has also been part of the success of many funded projects. As one of our funded projects puts it “The issues addressed through our projects are common to us all”. So it is about building a bigger picture as well. 62% of our projects thought that they were contributing to the sharing of values and common goals within their local communities. Some projects, for example, encouraged practical action through addressing common concerns on climate change. In another project, local faith groups and places of worship had committed themselves to becoming Fair Trade, and ensured their commitment to common values in this way. It has been found that shared values often emerge when engaging

with people of no religious faith. 83% of our projects were working with such people.

Local projects were able to increase the number of their volunteers, almost an average of four volunteers per project, which is quite a high number if you consider how many projects we have across the country. It is these volunteers that the projects actually praise most. Going back to the Weymouth Peace Garden project, they said that their volunteers were a key factor in the project’s success – the volunteers, who as they put it, “have come out in all weathers to work on the project”. It just shows how much dedication and commitment is there in communities!

To summarise what I have said so far, we found that small local inter faith projects make a great contribution to the community life around them. A single small grant – and I remind you that the smallest grant which we give out in Faiths in Action is £500 for a one year project, which is only a small amount of money – leads to increased contact with ‘hard to reach’ groups; benefits to the wider community; and an increase in volunteering in the local community, and, as a result, a well-connected community.

We have looked at what our projects have achieved so far and how they have been getting on with their work. As a funder, we are very much aware that there is still a lot of work to be done to make sure that these good local projects are sustainable and can continue their work. How can this be achieved? Our message to these projects would be, first of all, about taking stock of what has been achieved and reflecting on the lessons which have been learned. Faith communities, by their nature, are reflective communities and looking into developing sustainable structures requires the use of this reflective practice. So faith communities are in a very good position to engage in this process.

Another point is about ‘succession plans’ in organisations. The danger in any organisation is that one member of staff can acquire and



accumulate a lot of knowledge but that if this person leaves the knowledge goes with them. This is true of any kind of organisation but it is particularly true of faith-based organisations because their staff are so committed and so dedicated to the cause.

My next point is about the importance of monitoring and collecting evidence. Funded groups are accountable to their funders. When we approached one of our funded groups and asked for their monitoring reports, they said that they were only accountable to God. Whilst this might be true, and God might know everything, CDF does not, so we have to be told! And this is not just the case with CDF. Any funder would need to see information about the impact of reach, activities and effects from a funded project. It is not, of course, just funders who need this information. It is about making sure that we ourselves know how much we have achieved since we started the journey.

I said early on that almost a quarter of our funded groups were not very experienced in applying for funds before Faiths in Action. Now that they have had first-hand experience of this process and know how to do it successfully, they can build on it and apply to other funders too. So it is worth mentioning that whilst CDF is currently managing and running programmes on behalf of Government, there are other funders, other funding opportunities out there that are really worth exploring. There is an old Russian saying that goes Не кладите все яйца в одну корзину – уроните разобьются все! In other words, “Never put all your eggs in one basket”. Diversifying funding and income sources is really important, and not just for these organisations, but for any organisation.

So where shall we look for funding? What other funding sources are there? There are many options available, for example trusts and private donors. What do we know about trusts? Do you know that there are almost 9,000 Trusts in the UK, and the top 500 gave

out almost £3.3 billion of grants in one single year?<sup>2</sup> That is the statistic for 2006, which is the latest I could get. This figure, of £3.3 billion, represents around three quarters of the value of all charitable grant making and 10% of the combined UK voluntary sector’s income. In 2008 or 2009, almost half of the adult population of this country gave donations, and the total amount that they gave was £9.9 billion! So this is another potential source of support. The present recession has been accompanied by an 11% decrease in the total amount of donations, but at the same time people are donating more regularly. Although there are fewer larger donations around, people give to the same causes consistently. What are the top causes in this country? Children? Animals? Actually medical research is the most popular cause in terms of numbers of supporters but the second to the top is religious charities. And religious charities take the largest share of the total amount of private donations.

Commissioning and tendering opportunities are also important. If anyone is interested in these, it is worth looking at a couple of websites. [www.supply2.gov.uk](http://www.supply2.gov.uk) will give you free notifications of public sector tendering opportunities for an amount below £100,000, in one local area of your choice. Then there is Tenders Electronic Daily (TED), for tendering opportunities in Europe. In the current economic climate there might be some good service delivery opportunities for the faith sector, considering the current move towards localism and the particular expertise that the faith communities have in this area. And why not make your next community event a fundraising event? That might be relatively easy to achieve and good fun for the community as well.

Just a few final points. We have looked at what can be done internally to make a community organisation more sustainable and also at funding opportunities and how to increase them. There are external factors and external structures that might also be helpful to make organisations more sustainable. The first and

2 Statistics taken from *Charity Trends 2007*, published by the Charities Aid Foundation

the most important one is about partnerships and collaboration. In the competitive climate of the funding environment, sometimes people think there is no space for partnerships, but this does not have to be the case. Commissioners and funders usually encourage partnership working; if you can demonstrate that you have very strong local connections and work with other projects, then your application is likely to have more appeal to a funder. Partnerships can also help with sharing resources and making local resources last longer – for example through sharing office space and administrative support between different projects or through using faith buildings for community activities. Partnerships can help you engage better with all parts of the community. And, who knows, it might lead to some unexpected but very positive outcomes. For example, it might lead to finding a new private donor locally. It might be your next door neighbour or it might be somebody in your local community who would be willing to contribute money to your project.

I think the key to creating a sustainable future is in our taking stock of what we have done to date, and what we have learned in the past and using this knowledge now, acting now. That is my message for today.

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Many thanks for that extremely useful and informative presentation.

**Deanna Van der Velde:** I'm going to ask a very practical question. I am from the Orthodox Jewish community in Newcastle. For those of us that have got bids into the Faiths in Action programme and have not yet heard anything, do we know what is going to happen? I submitted a bid in April, and have had one letter, but nothing else yet.

**Anna Allen:** Unfortunately, I cannot give you a decisive answer at this moment. You heard the remarks by Andrew Stunell this morning. We are waiting for the Secretary of State to confirm the position on the Faiths in Action fund. The prospects are very positive, as the

Minister indicated today but unfortunately at this stage we cannot confirm the position because we are waiting for the Government to give us the go-ahead. Meanwhile, we are still assessing and approving those 12,000 applications I mentioned. We are still accepting and assessing them – but at the moment we cannot let people know the outcome because the Secretary of State has yet to take a decision on the future of the programme.

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Thank you very much.

# Workshop introductions and feedback

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** So it is now time to go into the workshops. We are very fortunate to have a strong team of presenters and facilitators this afternoon. In general, the workshops open with a short presentation and then straight away go into the discussion. As usual, a note will be kept of key points from each workshop for use in the report on the day. [Note: workshop key points can be found at pages 72–92.]

Facilitators and participants are asked to draw out one key point from their workshop which they would like fed back to the plenary session and to choose a person to report back. Those reporting back will have a maximum of two minutes each so please bear that in mind.

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**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Welcome back. It is now time to receive the feedback from the workshops. Could I request the rapporteurs please to come up and give us this, sticking to a time limit of two minutes each.

## Workshop 1: Developing a relevant and lively programme

**Patricia Stoat:** Workshop 1 was about developing a relevant and lively programme. But we very quickly moved from that to discussion on the challenges that are faced in rural areas, and the question of the rural/urban divide. We noted that in urban areas there are often tensions with the BNP and also between, and sometimes within, faith communities. A number of important points were made, such as: “You have to believe in what you are doing”, and “Trust is critical because in a crisis you need to be able

to talk to each other”. But I think our ‘take-home’ message was that it is very often when we tackle the challenges that we develop interactive and lively programmes. It is when people start being creative in the face of difficulties that we get programmes that draw people in, hold their attention and get their commitment.

## Workshop 2: Outreach and Membership

**Amy Willshire:** Our brief for Workshop 2 was to look at outreach and membership. We had an interesting and wide-ranging discussion, but since I only have two minutes, I shall make my report very brief! We addressed issues of engagement with those outwith our own membership; how to encourage particular faith groups to become members; and the issue of who should be round the table of dialogue. In essence our conclusion was that we need to ask: “Whose agenda is it?” And we have to ensure that we are working at the pace of those whom we wish to engage with us. If we are not, then the debate and the dialogue will not progress.

## Workshop 3: Resources and training for religious literacy and inter faith understanding

**The Revd Andrew Brown:** In Workshop 3 we were looking at resources and training for religious literacy and inter faith understanding. We unanimously agreed that it is important to have tutors and presenters who embody what they are talking about. Authenticity in this context is vital, so as well as having knowledge of their own faith

tradition – and that importantly includes its diversity since each of the traditions is very diverse – it is about being authentic and also embodying aspects of good inter faith dialogue. We also added that if it were possible to have two such people in that embodied way, modelling that kind of inter faith dialogue as well as the diversity, that would teach more than a million text books. So we came up with this phrase – or one person did – summing it up as “Text people rather than text books”. However, because so many of our faith traditions are centred firmly on text, we, of course, did not want to lose sight of the importance of text. Nonetheless we went away with this key idea that having embodied teaching people is a great help in offering this kind of training and resource to the community.

## Workshop 4: Involving young people in local inter faith programmes.

**Dr Phil Henry:** In Workshop 4 we looked at involving young people in local inter faith programmes, and took a couple of examples from experience in Derby and in Manchester. We came up with the undeniable notion that we have to work in a more joined up and connected way with young people, for the sake of our very own futures. A number of phrases reflected where we were and how we were thinking, such as ‘share and connect’. The challenge is to empower, enable and, very significantly, resource – not just in a financial sense but also in terms of people and places – our attempts to support all the various aspects of youth work with a view to creating the future, which is clearly in our hands as we speak.

## Workshop 5: Multimedia approaches to making the work known.

**Naomi Dalton:** In our workshop we discussed

how to use multimedia opportunities to make your work known and raise awareness about your cause. We discussed print, broadcasting, radio, and also had some debate about the positives and negatives of social and online media. We concluded that social media can be a cheap and efficient way of reaching the masses and raising awareness. But we also discussed how it can be quite time-consuming in keeping various websites updated. And there are a lot of trouble-makers out there on the internet who are wanting to make controversial comments. So there is an issue of quality control as well. But we came to the conclusion that the multi-media is here to stay and if you do not engage with it and embrace it and use it in a positive way to put across your messages then it will move on without you and other people will put out their messages and your own messages will not be heard.

## Workshop 6: National faith communities and support for local inter faith work.

**Katharina Muller:** In Workshop number 6 we were considering the relationship between national faith bodies and local inter faith work. We came to the conclusion that this needs to be a relationship where both partners are willing to learn. So national bodies need to be willing to use their networks and their abilities to spread the message but also need to be willing and able to learn from local work that is going on and to draw on that expertise. A two-way learning process is very important. We also recognised that the national faith community bodies are very different from each other, so there is a need to understand how each faith community organises itself at national level. We thought, too, that it is very important for these national faith community bodies to take responsibility for the training of their leaders and clergy, and to make sure that faith leaders are confident about interreligious dialogue and will provide a role model for this.

## Workshop 7: Inter Faith Week: looking back to 2009 and forward to this year's Week.

**David Vane:** Workshop 7 was talking about Inter Faith Week, looking back at 2009 and then looking forward to this year's activities. There were lots of great ideas but I think the key message we have is that collaboration is key and is what it is all about. But we did make the proviso, that in order to achieve this, you need to have credibility. We decided that what you need to do is to look at the people with whom you are working already, and that know you, and what you do and then build links through them to other people you need. So, for example, in Southampton, we work with the police, fire brigade, local authority and hospitals – we will talk to anybody, especially if they will give us resources! I do not feel particularly pessimistic about funding this year, I believe that I am going to have a lot of people to whom I can go and talk because they want what we have to offer in terms of relationships between different communities. So I think the message of collaboration is what we got from our group and that is going to be really important to all of us in planning our Inter Faith Week activity this year.

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Thank you very much to all the rapporteurs.



# Perspectives on the development of local inter faith work for the future

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** We now have the opportunity to hear four short reflections from different perspectives on the future development of local inter faith work. May I invite Deanna van der Velde to speak to us first of all. She is the Chair of the North East Branch of the Council of Christians and Jews and also Chair of Newcastle SACRE and a member of the North East Regional Faith Network task group and of Newcastle Council of Faiths. Newcastle Council of Faiths has been an Inter Faith Network member body for many years.

**Deanna van der Velde**  
*Newcastle Council of Faiths,  
Chair, North East branch of  
Council of Christians and  
Jews, Chair, Newcastle  
SACRE, and member, Task  
Group, North East Regional  
Faith Network*

**Deanna van der Velde:** I am delighted to be here representing not just Newcastle, but the North East of England.

Newcastle is a very vibrant and diverse community. It is a town that has welcomed the stranger – and that is part of my own heritage. My parents came to Newcastle as a place of safety in 1938. That is, in a way, the basis from which I have worked. My inter faith background comes from being, for many years, a Jewish schoolteacher in a non-Jewish school. People ask me “Please will you come and talk to the children about Judaism?” I am

not going to tell you how many years ago that began!

Inter faith work has developed at a huge pace. Let me just mention one initiative which took place under the auspices of the Council of Christians and Jews in April of this year. Our local Rabbi, Rabbi Dovid Lewis, and the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, Bishop Martin Wharton, and a group of Orthodox and Reform Jews, together with Christians of all denominations, paid a four day visit to Auschwitz and to Krakow. That was just a beginning. It is all about dialogue and establishing trust. People ask us, “What are we going to do in the future?” We need to talk through all the difficult issues that we have encountered before we can go and share our expertise with others.

I am Chair of Newcastle SACRE. There is good representation on it from all the faiths. If you are in a faith community and there is a SACRE that needs your expertise, please do go forward and offer your help. SACREs are places where friendships are made and friendships in inter faith work are hugely important. Some of my own best friends have come from these relationships.

In my synagogue, I run, as a volunteer, its outreach programme. I have had to arrange for somebody to take my place today so that I can come down here for this meeting. I get requests not just from schools, but other groups as well. I get a phone call: “You don’t know me, but the inter faith adviser to the Bishop has given me your name. Please can we come to your synagogue”. It may be a Mothers’ Union group or another church group or a Women’s Institute. I try very hard

not to turn anyone down, because it is very important to have dialogue at that level. Often I will be invited back to these groups to offer a presentation about a Jewish festival, about Shabbat or about Rosh Hashanah. One group, which sadly has folded now, I must have visited about six or seven times – by which time I was running out of ideas!

I do have to blow the trumpet for the North East. Our region goes up to the Northumbrian borders, right down to Cleveland and across to Cumbria. There are only two synagogues in Newcastle – the Orthodox and the Reform – but between us we have visits from a huge number of schools. I reckon we must welcome somewhere between six and eight thousand children within a year. Each one of those children will hopefully go away with some piece of knowledge they have gained. I get requests to take groups of Year 1's (five year olds). I have sometimes questioned the value of that, but all the teachers say to me "They do take something away with them from coming to a faith building." So a message to you all: Open up your places of worship. Learning outside the classroom is hugely important. Parents come as well and they say too, "Thank you, we have learned so much".

I have also done INSET training for Catholic teachers, including four or five sessions over the last few years, with another one due in November. I am hoping I can discuss with the Anglican Dioceses of Newcastle and Durham doing that for their teachers as well. I have visits from Newcastle and Durham Universities. I have been to Middlesbrough University to talk to people who deal in crisis management and who need to know about what would happen, perhaps, if they were dealing with Jewish people in a particular situation. This need must apply to other faiths too.

Regularly, the priests from Ushaw College come as part of their training, to a Shabbat morning service, and our Rabbi has dialogue with them. Nursery nurses come on visits, as do people who are working in other fields

such as further education – which is a huge field that is opening up in terms of chaplaincy. For example, Leicester College students of FE who were doing floristry built a succah – the temporary booth that Jewish people build during harvest festival time.

Maureen Sier talked about problems with the BNP. Durham and Northumberland have that problem too. We need to talk in schools in those areas because BNP activists sometimes stand outside the schools trying to get these young minds on their side. I am hoping to work with Durham schools to enable discussions on important issues and how we react as a faith community. I have just heard of an initiative to link Durham Johnston, a state school, with the King David High School in Manchester, a Jewish school.

Women in Conversation is another group to which I belong. This is another important initiative which lets us talk about our issues and discuss them as openly as possible.

I will finish by using the same words as one of our speakers this morning – I am passionate about what we do. We need to be passionate about what we do; to have trust in each other; and to have openness, even in the most difficult situations.

## **Ganesh Lall** *member, South London Inter Faith Group and Caribbean Hindu Society*

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Our next speaker is Ganesh Lall, who is a member of the Caribbean Hindu Society and of the South London Inter Faith Group, which has been in operation for many years and is an important example of a group which spans a number of different localities.

**Ganesh Lall:** I come from the Caribbean. In case some of you are confused by my saying that, one out of every five people from the Caribbean is of Indian origin. When I first arrived in this country, in 1954, there were no

Hindu temples, so I started attending the Catholic church in Kensington Church Street. One day, after a few weeks, the Father came up to me for a chat and discovered that I was a Hindu. I could see the confusion in his face. I said to him, "Father, I come here because you pray to God". When I moved to Notting Hill Gate, I joined a Sufi group. And when I went to Wandsworth, I attended meetings of the Quakers, the Society of Friends. So, you see, I have been an ambassador of inter faith relations since I was 19!

The Caribbean Hindu Society is arguably the oldest Hindu society in this country. It was founded in 1959. We have our own temple in Brixton, and schoolchildren come there on visits from time to time. A few weeks ago, we had ninety of them. When you start playing the *dorla* [drums] and sing our *bajans* [hymns] these children are very interested. But they come up to me and say, "Yes, I know about Hinduism. You have three thousand gods and you worship the cow, and you worship idols." I am pleased when they say such things to me, because then I am able to enlighten them and say that it is *not so*. Sometimes I say we do not have three hundred gods, but have three million and they have a good laugh!

As you will guess, it was very easy for me to join the South London Inter Faith Group. It is a very strong and active, even though small, group. From year to year we organise inter faith walks and recently have studied some scriptural texts together, with meetings such as one dealing with the attitudes to death of Hindus, Jains and other faiths. At that meeting, nine religions gave their views on death, a macabre subject for some, but a very important one. This went very well and gave us all a glimpse of what the various religions thought of this particular theme. Education is so necessary. We should know more about one another's religions.

A great Soul (and I wish I could remember his name) once said that we know only enough about other people's religions to hate them, not enough to love them. So I would like to

leave with you the thought that we should try to discover what others believe in. This makes for harmony, for good friendship, and is very important even for our own well-being. Diversity is no good if you do not know what it involves. Diversity adds richness to our lives and this country provides ample proof of this.

**Mehru Fitter MBE**  
*member, Coventry Multi Faith Forum, Executive member, West Midlands Faiths Forum and member, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe*

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Our third speaker is Mehru Fitter, who is a member of Coventry Multi Faith Forum, an Executive member of the West Midlands Faiths Forum and a member of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe.

**Mehru Fitter:** I bring you greetings from Coventry, which has an international reputation as a centre for peace and reconciliation.

Coventry Multi Faith Forum, of which I am a member, is situated right in the heart of that wonderful, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic city. Like most Forums, our aim is to increase awareness and understanding of diversity and to foster harmony among the different faiths in the city. I am glad to say that as a result of our success in two FCCBF funding rounds, we have built up an excellent collection of resources, which we use to mount exhibitions on different themes, such as 'Charity Begins at Home'. We do not just mount exhibitions but we actively seek feedback on them. Some of our visitors want to give us this orally, others are brave enough to enter their comments in our visitors' book! We go through all these comments assiduously. If we come across a compliment, we regard it as a tonic; if we come across any criticism we regard it as medication which we have got to take to

improve our physique!

Our crowning achievement is our annual Peace Walk, which is preceded by a recitation of prayers from different faiths. Many people have been very impressed by this walk, and say that it is an excellent example of 'learning on the move'. Is there anything we might change about it in the future? As I said to you earlier, we seek feedback. We have received feedback that perhaps, in addition to our main Peace Walk, we could also consider having smaller, neighbourhood peace walks, so that clusters of places of worship can come together locally and receive visitors.

Most of our members are in my older age bracket, although I am not going to tell you how old I am! But this year, we have been successful in recruiting young members and are absolutely delighted to have done so. The salutary effect is that we have now formed a sub-group which is beginning to plan a residential event for young people of diverse faiths, although this is still in its embryonic stages.

In the last few months we have received visitors not only from different cities in England, but also from Ireland and other European countries. The last group that we received was a group of visitors from Kiel. All of them were White and Christian. For all of them – or I should say, for most of them – we were their first encounter with a multi-cultural, multi-faith society. They said they had never seen a gurdwara, even if they had heard of such places. They did not know what the inside of one would look like. So, besides giving them an introduction to the different faiths, we actually managed to fit in a visit to a local gurdwara, where they observed part of the worship and also partook of the *langar*, the Sikh communal meal. Before they left, they said they would come back and bring along a multi-faith group, and they have suggested that we consider linking with them and pay them a return visit. We are considering that proposition very favourably.

I would now like to focus on an event which

was an unqualified success – in part, if I may say so, because of the lead provided by the Inter Faith Network for the UK and the support given by the West Midlands Faiths Forum. In 2009, Coventry Multi Faith Forum co-ordinated the city-wide celebration of the first ever Inter Faith Week in England. IFN's initial communiqué endorsing the Week and giving examples of activities that could be arranged during it fired the imagination of faith organisations that attended planning meetings for it. Also, the support we received from Coventry City Council was so phenomenal that we decided to extend the Inter Faith Week on either side, so that it actually became the Inter Faith "season"! I would also like to thank West Midlands Faith Forum which did us proud by advertising every single event on their wonderful website. A person who deserves our particular thanks is the West Midlands Faiths Forum's Inter Faith Development Officer who was a tower of strength and a pillar of support at all times. The national, regional and the city launch of Inter Faith Week did a lot to raise the profile of Coventry Multi Faith Forum.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of attending a regional link meeting for local inter faith groups arranged by IFN and the West Midlands Faith Forum. This enabled attendees to have a panoramic view of different inter faith forums in the region and also highlighted issues with which we all have to grapple. But even more important was the fact that we all learned about good practice that could be imported into our own work.

I hope that this three-way link – national, regional and local – will continue for a long time. The first decade of this Millennium has seen a lot of confrontation and a lot of alienation, and the effects have been felt even thousands of miles away from the combat zones. So it is my fervent hope that the combined effort and energy of IFN, Regional Faith Forums and local faith forums will increase inter faith dialogue, provide the opportunity to learn from and about faiths and increase people's capacity to live in a world of difference.

## Amy Willshire *‘Faith Ambassador’, Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum,*

we are doing really remains at the heart of that. I am personally inspired to continue doing this work, trying to revitalise my own community.

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Finally, Amy Willshire will share her wisdom with us. She is Faith Ambassador for Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum in London, and also a Trustee of the Inter Faith Network.

**Amy Willshire:** I have heard so much today that is very relevant to the work that I am doing in Waltham Forest. Issues regarding membership – some of the questions we have had about who is involved and how can we expand that; and how do we manage our work at a time when the position on funding is uncertain. It is great to hear that there may be some positive news coming about funding, but I know that in my own area a lot of our funding is now only project-based and it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure it for our core work. As the only employee, and now working only one day a week for my organisation, that is really difficult. But listening to what I have heard today has really inspired me to go back and try to re-engage with our faith communities and try to get them to lead on some of the exciting events that I have heard about, like picnics in the park. Other events that have been mentioned and that we can run during Inter Faith Week have really encouraged me too: particularly activities that we can develop on a limited budget. What I have heard is really inspiring.

I am looking forward to seeing how the new concept of the ‘Big Society’ will change the landscape for the work that we are doing. But I have one reflection on this. It seems that the language of ‘the Big Society’ may now be replacing ‘community cohesion’. But the motto of Waltham Forest is “Community is life, but lack of community is death”. Whatever the buzz words are, we invent them for a particular time. The ‘Big Society’ may be today’s term, but the central concept that is running through it is one that is much older than any of these phrases and the work that



# Closing plenary discussion

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** We now have just a few minutes to hear from you following these reflections.

**Ravinder Kaur Nijjar (Scottish Inter Faith Council):** First of all I would just like to thank you all for such a wonderful day, and in particular to thank all the Network staff for all their hard work and yourselves, the Co-Chairs, for taking us through the day. It has been very enlightening. I would just like to make a comment about last year's Inter Faith Week in England and Wales. I was absolutely staggered by the varied number of initiatives and the activities that took place. When I was Chair of the Scottish Inter Faith Council in 2003, I ran a small pilot project for Inter Faith Week that year and in 2004 we held a full scale Week. To see it develop so quickly in England, (and your going forward with it again this year), is absolutely amazing. And it is, of course, nice to see England following in the footsteps of Scotland! In the future I would really like to see this Week happening across Europe – a European Inter Faith Week – and then a global Inter Faith Week.

**Dr Harriet Crabtree:** We are very lucky to have on the Trustee Board of the Inter Faith Network two of the most actively involved members of the Scottish Inter Faith Council, including Ravinder, who have given wise advice on the setting up of an Inter Faith Week project in England and, as it turned out, also in Wales. The report on the Week pays tribute to this and notes the important example of Scottish Inter Faith Week. On the Inter Faith Week website, Scottish Inter Faith Week is also flagged up. For interesting reasons, historically, the Scottish Week always happens in the week in which St Andrew's Day falls, and the English Week and Welsh Week precede it, currently, by a week.

**John Murray (Nottingham Inter Faith Council):** There has been a lot of talk today

about working with young people and SACREs and also working with, shall we say, sparsely populated communities. I think it is very important that we recognise that we need to work with young people. In the Nottingham area, we were lucky to get some CDF funding at the Religious Studies Resource Centre which is our partner in Nottingham. We are taking a Faith Experience out to schools, particularly into the surrounding countryside, where there is very little chance to engage with ethnic minority groups and other cultures. It has been an enormous success. Having managed to fund the launch of this from the CDF grant, schools are now starting to pay for that "Experience". It is not intended to compete with actual visits to places of worship, but does give schools a chance to engage, when for a variety of reasons, they are unable to make visits to places of worship. We hope that this initiative is going to expand over the coming year.

**Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid (Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group and Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain):** It is important that we do not forget that, while the achievements of inter faith work locally, regionally, nationally, as well as in various other parts of Europe, are growing fast, we still have to make more effort to reach the people who are not yet with us. We are often talking to people who we know already and with whom we are friends, or at least are aware of, but there remain large numbers of people who have no religious faith, or have faith but are suspicious of inter faith engagement. We should not sit down and be content with our achievements so far. We have to re-double our efforts to reach these people.

**Naomi Dalton (Religious Education Council for England and Wales):** I particularly enjoyed the talk by Maureen Sier about the work that she is doing in Scotland. There was a comment made in that session about

‘contrived diversity’ in rural communities, asking whether we really need to have inter faith groups in communities which are not particularly diverse? As somebody who has lived and grown up in South East London, I always took it for granted that we are a diverse society, and I have always loved living in one. But I remember I once went on a biology field trip up to a small rural town near Wales, where we had to engage with the locals to do a task. I enjoyed this, but afterwards, a lot of my classmates who are of different ethnicities said they had felt really uncomfortable with the way that they were treated by the locals. I do not think that we should presume that, just because a small, rural town is not very diverse, that those who live there will just accept diversity. I think it is really important for urban communities to work with rural communities to increase their awareness as well, so that we can feel that we can travel to other parts of the country and not feel uncomfortable but just feel more together.

**Resham Singh Sandhu (Leicester Council of Faiths and Leicestershire Interfaith Forum):**

The work we have done here in Great Britain is without doubt a wonderful achievement, but one area about which I am concerned is the extent to which Central and Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, Romania and Poland, are untouched by inter faith work. I had a very good experience in Hungary where I went to the Rotary Club in Budapest. I talked about the multi-cultural and inter faith work we are doing in Great Britain and afterwards a Government official came to me and said, “I would like to talk to you about the discussion which we had at the Rotary Club”. He was very surprised that we talk about faith at all here. How can we link our good work in this country with that in those countries which have not become involved in inter faith work so far?

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Thank you for all your comments. We must now draw the meeting to a close.

# Co-Chairs' closing reflections

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** We have had a very busy and productive day. As has happened in the past at National Meetings, we have interacted and networked and have shared views and experiences. We have learned from one another and have drawn inspiration, but at the same time we have recognised the different challenges that we are facing. We have also, in flagging up some problems, possibly set ourselves an agenda for the future as well. I am most grateful for everybody's contributions. May I now ask Bishop Alastair to add his closing remarks.

**Bishop Alastair Redfern:** My observation would be that there is a very impressive optimism around and a sense of continuing development in much of what we have heard today. That augurs well for the future through increasing synergies and expanding visions. But there are also sub-texts, as we have just been reminded, about the people who are not joining in inter faith discussion and action and about a kind of prejudice and even opposition to religious faith that is around us. There are also sub-texts about finance and the need for capacity building and the uncertainties we face as we look to the future. These positive and more challenging messages and subtexts must shape the way that we respond to some of the challenges that we have recognised today and how we channel our energy and optimism, and, to use a word which someone used earlier, our 'passion'.

We have the 2010 Inter Faith Week on the horizon. This is a very strong platform we now have in the public arena and I hope we can really develop that. But there is a need to find other ways besides that 'one-off' annual platform to reach out and engage others about this important agenda.

In general, I think we should be very thankful for the spirit which has been apparent today

and for the energy, vision and commitment that people have travelled a long way to share together. Thank you for that.

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Before we close this Meeting in readiness for the AGM which will begin shortly, I want to say a very heartfelt thank you to all of you for having come and for having made this such an interesting and fruitful event. I would also like to thank all the plenary speakers and those who gave presentations in the workshops; to thank the facilitators and rapporteurs, and Bhupinder Singh; and, last but not least, to thank Harriet and her Network office colleagues. Events such as this are only organised successfully as a result of a lot of hard work.

**Dr Harriet Crabtree:** And may I make a special mention of Hannah Mercer, who oversaw all of the administrative arrangements for today magnificently.

**Dr Girdari Bhan:** Thank you. And thank you again to all who took part today. Travel safely.

# Workshop notes

Note: The discussion points listed in each of these workshop notes are not conclusions agreed by the workshop as a whole, but points and suggestions made by individual participants.

# Workshop 1

## Developing a relevant and lively programme

**Facilitator:** Patricia Stoa, Chief Executive Officer, Faiths Forum for the East Midlands

**Presenters:** Ryad Khodabocus, Community Relations Development Worker Luton Borough Council/Luton Council of Faiths and Peter Adams, Luton Council of Faiths

**Patricia Stoa** welcomed participants to the workshop and introduced the first presenters, Ryad Khodabocus and Peter Adams from Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF).

**Peter Adams** said that Luton is a town bidding to become a city. It has a population of about 200,000. Within a couple of years a majority of Luton's population would come from ethnic minorities; 54% of school children in Luton do so now.

**Ryad Khodabocus** explained that LCoF runs a variety of projects involving music, sports and the arts. It had developed several projects through which it had created what was described in sociological terms as the 'third space': a platform and space for people to come together and discuss issues of common concern and interest. The challenge they faced was to get young people together and so they had put on some specific activities of interest to young people such as archery. They had also used the 'Diversity Game'. LCoF was also involved in making Luton a Fairtrade Town. As part of this they were making connections and engaging different faiths in conversation by using, as the basis for an opening conversation, Fairtrade produce grown in those parts of the world from which individuals from specific faiths came.

LCoF had also organised cricket matches and faith walks, both activities intended to bring together people of faith and people of no religious faith. The faith walk for 2010 was targeted at young people and they had painted a peace mural to be unveiled during the walk. He noted that it was all well and good to be creative in organising programmes around an organisation's aims and objectives

but it was also important in every case for the designated worker handling the programme to be passionate about it and to value the people and the communities with which they worked.

**Peter Adams** said that he liked to describe the aspect of LCoF's programmes he was involved in as the 'unprogrammed programme'. He is a community peace-builder and has been working on projects in a number of places bringing Muslims, Christians and Jews into dialogue with one another. In early 2009 the Gaza invasion brought turmoil into the community, but led to opportunity to bring Muslims and Jews together. During the troops' homecoming event in Luton in 2009, in response to a demonstration by a small number of extremists there was a counter demonstration by some angry young white people. Growing unrest in the community resulted in a mosque in Luton being fire-bombed three months later. In response to plans by the newly formed English Defence League to hold a demonstration in Luton at that time, LCoF put out a statement which built confidence in the community and was featured on news bulletins. More recently when the Orthodox rabbi had to walk through a Muslim community on his way home from synagogue he began to receive occasional verbal attacks and threats. As a result, members of the Christian, Muslim and other faiths started to accompany him on his way home and continued to do so until the verbal attacks on him came to an end a few months later.

**Ryad Khodabocus** said that other LCoF activities included a woodland programme, addressing issues of environment, and a One World Week event with participation by more



than 300 people over the last two years, compared to previous years where it started with roughly 100 people.

**Patricia Stoa** thanked Peter Adams and Ryad Khodabocus for their presentations and invited an introduction to Suffolk Inter Faith Resource (SIFRE) from Dr David Capey.

**Dr David Capey** said that he could identify with the morning's presentation by Maureen Sier on inter faith work in less diverse places, as it related well to his experience in Suffolk. Issues in Suffolk included rural racism and rural 'faithism'. In places where people did not travel much, even people from the next village could be seen as a threat! He said that as a result one of SIFRE's programmes was to arrange visits by members of different faith groups to local communities. Earlier in the week, he had taken members from the Muslim community with him into a church study group. Some elderly people in the church had clearly been enthused at the opportunity to meet their visitors.

Dr Capey explained that SIFRE was run by two full-time volunteers and employed paid staff and tutors on an 'as needed' basis. It worked with small groups of people, in contrast to LCoF's programme. At the moment SIFRE was running a series of dialogues on topics like 'What on earth are we doing here?' This was to enable faith communities to share their own specific visions. In previous years SIFRE received core funding support from Suffolk County Council. This year the Council decided to continue its support but only through a service level agreement. SIFRE therefore had to develop and submit to the Council their one year programme for which they received funding. SIFRE is running events called "Forums of Faiths", Study Groups, Lunch Time Seminars and Religious Literacy Courses for local authority staff.

Dr Capey said that people of faith do not have just goodwill; they have a vision which empowers them to contribute and deliver over and above what was expected. He said that one of the dangers of receiving funding

from the Council was that it could direct their activities and they could be perceived as becoming a 'tool' of the Council. To avoid this, they made sure that the programme drawn up was under their control and reflected what they wanted to see done.

**Christa Rennie** from Milton Keynes asked how SIFRE began. David Capey said that it had started when his wife Cynthia Capey was teaching theology to people from Christian and Agnostic backgrounds. They wanted to learn about other faiths and asked if they could meet people of faiths different to their own. She facilitated these sessions which developed into an educational programme and led to the formation of SIFRE. Some of the same individuals from the different faiths became tutors who were sent out into schools to talk about their faiths. Likewise these tutors have worked with social workers, hospital staff, Police and generally with members of the statutory and voluntary sectors. Clients are charged for this service and tutors receive payment.

**Patricia Stoa** thanked Dr Capey for his presentation and invited questions and discussions on the workshop theme from its participants.

**Andrew Clarke** asked Peter Adams whether he had had a chance to dialogue with some of the demonstrators from EDL and similar groups. **Peter Adams** said that he had had some engagement with them, in particular four young white working class men over a period of a few months. There were people in some of these groups who described themselves as Christian and he was trying to engage with them, but it was extremely challenging to do so as some of them had grown up in communities where they had felt excluded from multi cultural developments.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- In Glasgow there had been a similar situation with the 2007 attempted airport bombings. Local inter faith networks had

already been formed before the events of 2007 happened. Because trust at various strategic levels had already been established, people from different communities came together very quickly, and those relationships helped to contain the anger over the bombing. If this kind of network had not existed in Glasgow, the situation could very well have been a powder keg. Because of all the work that had gone on before, there were no disturbances. Inter faith work was absolutely crucial.

- If there were members in EDL who described themselves as Christian then it might be worth contacting some Christian leaders to get involved with them.
- When Sikhs and Muslims first settled in Suffolk, they described themselves as an 'Indian Association'. As time passed the Sikh community secured some funding to build a gurdwara, causing some in other communities including the Muslims to feel envious. It was suggested that the Muslim community were probably not so much 'envious' as disappointed that both communities could not have worked towards a similar goal, regardless of faith or community, when they both faced similar issues. In the context of how communities respond when others receive funding, it was suggested that sometimes groups could become the victims of their own success.
- It had been suggested that a homecoming parade of the troops in Leicester should be cancelled but the City Council had refused to do this. Instead, they worked with faith leaders and persuaded them all to support and attend the parade together and it had gone off smoothly. One of the banners held high read "Welcome to multi cultural Leicester".
- For 2009 Inter Faith Week, United Religions Initiative, which generally works in urban areas, had run an event called 'Beyond the Boundaries' which was taken

into rural areas such as Loughton, where BNP were popular. To avoid confrontation the event was publicised through word of mouth and through contacting people.

- It was suggested that a lot of the problems that faith communities face, including counter-demonstrations, are fuelled by the media. It is important to use the resources within the inter faith and faith sector to break barriers elsewhere.
- Luton Council of Faiths is exploring putting on a programme that would involve bringing people from surrounding rural areas to a church for a meal, and then taking them to a mosque about a mile away. This helps encourage rural-urban understanding.
- It is very important to get all faiths to campaign for a secular society. The best model for a secular society was in India. Secularism does not mean disrespecting religions, but rather giving all, including faith communities freedom of expression.
- A participant said that in the street where he lived people came from different ethnic backgrounds. Sadly, neighbours were not talking to each other. IFN should try to promote an understanding of secularism that faiths could embrace and respond to more positively.
- It is the practice of SIFRE, in its work in rural communities, whenever the local council requests a meeting with faith communities, to suggest to it that it went to the faith community's centre instead of expecting the faith representatives to come to see the council.
- In an urban context it may be easier to find people who wanted to be involved in inter faith activity. In a rural context, even if one reaches only a few people that is good. Lively programmes have still been created as a result of the challenges which had to be faced there and because of interest in inter faith issues.

## Workshop 2

### Outreach and membership

**Facilitator:** Amy Willshire, 'Faith Ambassador', Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum, London

**Presenters:** Brian Pearce OBE, Adviser, Faith and Public Life, Inter Faith Network for the UK  
Resham Singh Sandhu MBE, Member, Leicester Council Faiths, Vice-Chair, Leicestershire Faith Forum and Trustee Faiths Forum for the East Midlands

**Amy Willshire** opened the workshop by welcoming those present and inviting them to introduce themselves briefly. She then invited Resham Singh Sandhu of the Leicester Council of Faiths and Brian Pearce, Adviser, Faith and Public Life, Inter Faith Network to make their presentations.

**Resham Singh Sandhu** gave an overview of the way in which the Leicester Council of Faiths had come into being and developed. Initially a small, informal group with a loose structure was set up in 1978 by the then Bishop of Leicester. It soon became clear that in order to engage effectively with public agencies and voluntary bodies the organisation needed a more formal structure and this then followed. LCoF began holding its meetings in different faith venues such as mosques, temples and churches and shared food on each occasion. These meetings built trust. LCoF then adopted a constitution which set out its aims, objectives and guidelines.

LCoF agreed that it would not sign up to any particular political positions; and that it would not discuss international issues (such as Palestine and Israel) as these would be too divisive. Instead, LCoF made it clear that any attack on one faith community would be seen as an attack on all faith communities and its statements to the media were based on this approach.

LCoF is used by local public bodies as a way to communicate with, and to get to know, faith communities in their area. For example, speakers from the NHS have been to speak to LCoF and other bodies have requested visits to places of worship. Eight faith communities are

involved: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. Its management board, by agreement with all eight faith communities, consists of 4 Christians, 4 Hindus, 4 Muslims, 4 Sikhs, 2 Baha'is, 2 Buddhists and 2 Jains. Occasionally LCoF receives requests from other communities for involvement. LCoF has two paid members of staff, one of whom is the Equality and Diversity Officer.

**George Ballentyne** [LCoF's Equality and Diversity Officer] said that Loughborough Council of Faiths, which is the geographically closest inter faith body to Leicester Council of Faiths, has a Pagan Chair and secular involvement, whereas LCoF has no Pagan or secular involvement. LCoF has a contract with Leicester City Council to act as a host organisation and as a conduit for information on religion and belief. The contract obliges LCoF to develop relations between faith communities. Although some communities are not part of LCoF, such as Wiccans, Ahmaddiyyas and members of the Chinese community and secularists, it is part of LCoF's remit to establish and maintain friendly relations with them. He regularly attends meetings at the Pagan Café in Leicester and this may have led them to revise their assumption that they needed to apply for membership of LCoF in order to be kept in touch.

**Brian Pearce** said that issues regarding outreach and membership of local inter faith groups are covered in IFN's publication, *The Local Inter Faith Guide*. This publication was due for revision soon and some of the outcomes of this National Meeting's

workshops would no doubt be reflected in this. It had been very helpful to hear Resham Singh Sandhu's account of the development of LCoF, which underlined that, although most local inter faith organisations are less formal when they begin, there is value in developing a full constitution and guidelines. One of the IFN membership criteria for local inter faith organisations is that they have a constitution, since this makes it evident that the organisation will have a continuing life and makes it more visible to the outside world.

The presentations during the morning plenary session had been relevant to the issue of the involvement of faith communities in local inter faith organisations. Approaches to membership could change over time. First and foremost an organisation needs to decide on its aims. For instance, if the aim is dialogue on topics of mutual interest then the organisation may only need a simple constitution with membership open to all. With a representative structure, much harder membership issues arise in terms of who to include and who is able to be representative of whom. It is important to recognise these difficulties and to discuss them openly. Issues arise over whether organisations such as New Religious Movements and sectarian bodies of faith communities should be involved. IFN's membership criteria for local inter faith organisations require that an organisation is "directed, like the Network, primarily at relationships between mainstream religious groups". However, there is no restriction on the groups which can participate in IFN member inter faith bodies and individuals from communities beyond the nine faith communities directly linked by IFN itself attend IFN events through their participation in member inter faith organisations.

It is helpful for inter faith organisations to be aware of the protection afforded to them by equalities legislation. Schedule 23 of the Equality Act 2010 (which also protects the 'boundary' of faith community organisations) offers legal protection in terms of defining the

membership of an organisation as long as this is clearly set out properly in the constitutional documents.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Not all people are interested in inter faith dialogue. It would be helpful to have some ideas on how to engage with them.
- 'You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink!' In other words, you cannot force faith communities to become involved in inter faith work, just as many people do not make use of free public services that are available, such as libraries.
- Whether or not local faith community representatives become involved in local inter faith work can depend very much on attitudes in individual places of worship. One possibility would be to arrange an *ad hoc* event with a talk on inter faith relations at a key place of worship.
- Some local inter faith organisations may choose to make adjustments to their membership as a result of pressure from their local authorities. It is very important that an organisation decides for itself whether it wants to adjust its membership policy, as faith communities need to retain 'ownership' of this.
- Each faith community contains a spectrum of attitudes between being willing to be involved in inter faith work and not being so.
- The structure of inter faith organisations has become much more sophisticated over recent years. One typology<sup>1</sup> of faith based organisations which has recently been proposed is as follows:
  1. Faith-based representative organisations or apex bodies
  2. Faith-based charitable or development organisations

<sup>1</sup> From a paper written by Gerard Clarke, of the Centre for Development Studies, University of Wales, Swansea

3. Faith-based socio-political organisations
  4. Faith-based missionary organisations
  5. Faith-based radical, illegal or terrorist organisations
- There are issues surrounding language and definitions that can cause difficulties for inter faith work. For example, if a Sikh carries a *kirpan* this may be acceptable but once it is called a dagger it may not be acceptable.
  - Religion might be defined as a set of beliefs concerning the universe; faith as a belief in the existence of God or Gods; and tradition as the handing down of belief and customs.
  - Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship is a grassroots organisation which is open to all. It has excellent relationships with local Muslims and with local mosques and they seem to have no objection to inter faith dialogue, but there is no direct Muslim membership of the body itself. Birmingham Council of Faiths also has a good relationship with local Muslims and local mosques but currently no Muslim members. Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group also has difficulty encouraging young Muslims to join the Group, though there are not many of them in the area.
  - Some faith communities can defer to status and authority; in these cases it could be more helpful to speak with clergy or academics than with lay members of the community about encouraging involvement in inter faith activities.
  - It may be helpful to contact the national faith community representative body of a community with which it is difficult to engage to see whether they can suggest local contacts who may be more responsive, whether individuals or places of worship. National faith community leaders are also in a position to reassure local faith communities that inter faith dialogue is an acceptable and worthwhile activity.
  - Before trying to engage with certain communities or inviting them into membership it is important for an organisation to know why it is doing it and what the aim of the engagement is. It is important to work at the pace of the people with whom you are trying to engage.
  - In Scotland the Universal Peace Federation has engaged with local inter faith organisations but in doing so has tried to get their members to join UPF.
  - In spite of the willingness of many faith communities to talk with Pagans at a distance, many Pagans still feel excluded from some inter faith organisations.
  - It is important for local inter faith organisations to reach out to chaplaincies in hospitals, prisons, colleges, universities and hospices.
  - In Leicester LCoF has helped to set up prayer rooms in local hospitals and police stations. The NHS now pays chaplains from 'minority' faith communities.
  - There have recently been difficulties with the new Lord Mayor of Leicester who has appointed a Humanist chaplain and who would not attend a civic service in Leicester Cathedral. A meeting was organised to discuss this as it is important to keep dialogue open in such situations even when there are difficulties.
  - It is important to reach out to those of non-religious beliefs and to include sceptics in the dialogue. A value-led society is important. Faiths offer values but so do other philosophies.
  - Exploration of engagement between those who understand themselves to be religious and those who do not is very important (and IFN is undertaking some work on this). However, that does not necessarily mean that inter faith organisations should therefore be



expanded to be all inclusive; it may be preferable to use other structures and processes for that dialogue.

## Workshop 3

### Resources and training for religious literacy and inter faith understanding

**Facilitator:** The Revd Andrew Brown, Public Education Programmes Manager for the Woolf Institute, Cambridge

**Presenters:** Jatinder Singh Birdi, Warwick District Faiths Forum

**Jonathan Marshall MBE and Vallabhdas Meswania, Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity**

**The Revd Andrew Brown** welcomed the workshop participants and introduced himself. He works at the Woolf Institute, which is an educational institution rather than an inter faith organisation. He explained that the focus of the workshop was on resources and training for religious literacy. He then introduced the presenters of the workshop: Jatinder Singh Birdi, Chair of the Warwick District Faiths Forum; Jonathan Marshall, Director of the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity; and Vallabhdas Meswania, a Trustee of the Plymouth Centre.

**Jonathan Marshall** gave a short account of the work of the Plymouth Centre which had been founded 10 years ago as a charity, with support from Plymouth City Council. The Centre works to raise awareness about religious education. It supports schools and provides training for both public and private institutions by running half- or full-day sessions. He highlighted two important roles of the Plymouth Centre.

The first is to explore commonly held assumptions about religion and faith communities by discussing questions such as “What is religion?” Some people may have little or no knowledge about their own faith, let alone other faith communities. The Centre aims to reach out to such people, who normally would not come to an inter faith event. He stressed the importance of moving beyond stereotypes and talked about his own experience of running training workshops, where he encountered participants who wanted to have an A4 information sheet for each faith. Instead of trying to fit every faith

into a single A4 sheet, we should concentrate on highlighting both distinctions and shared beliefs among the different faiths. As individual beliefs will always divide us, it is important that we identify common ground between our different faiths which can unite all humankind.

The second role of the Centre is in building bridges between different faiths. In its work the Centre seeks to embody the spirit of the Inter Faith Network’s ‘code’, *Building Good Relations Between People of Different Faiths and Beliefs*. He highlighted the importance of building and sustaining relationships through one-to-one conversations. He felt that everyone is part of this process; quoting Gandhi – “My life is my message”.

**Vallabhdas Meswania** shared his experience of giving training in schools. At first, he had no idea where to start, but he gradually found that students always wanted to meet an actual person of faith, for example a Hindu. He himself introduced students to Hinduism by celebrating the Festival of Lights with them and also showing them how he prays at home. He then talked about his personal experience of the generation gap – in his case between himself and his father, who was born in India, and also between himself and his sons, who were born in the UK. The three different generations experienced difficulties in adapting to each other’s cultural frameworks and it is these kinds of issues that require sensitive exploration on the training days that Vallabhdas contributes to at the Plymouth Centre.

**Jatinder Singh Birdi** introduced the Warwick District Faiths Forum (WDFE), which was established in 2006. He noted that the demand locally for training in religious awareness had been growing in recent years, as nowadays people increasingly found themselves working with colleagues of different faiths and became aware of the need to learn about different cultures than their own. WDFE has been providing half-day training sessions in religious awareness to the police, Warwickshire County Council, Stratford on Avon District Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council and will shortly be providing these for Warwick District Council. He pointed out that faith is personal to each individual. He agreed with Vallabhdas Meswania about the importance of having a person of faith physically present for question and answer sessions where people could ask questions freely and have an open discussion. People should not feel intimidated to ask questions, for example, how long a Sikh's hair is. One topic which came up during their training sessions was the bereavement procedures of different faiths. People wanted to know what they could do in bereavement situations without offending the bereaved person's family. In Stratford District, people had been surprised to see more than one faith in their training session. Some IT staff, who were normally not interested in religious awareness, had actually asked for more sessions.

Going into faith communities is necessary to understand them better, with a two-way process involving both decision makers and people from faith communities. When people see the different faiths brought together, for example during an exhibition, they realise that we are all human and have many shared values. It is great to see people of different faiths working and communicating with each other. People asked for a simple booklet outlining the key points of different Faiths. The WDFE produced an A5 booklet "Meeting Point – A Contribution to Faiths Awareness", which people can take away, which gives them a gentle introduction to different faiths. WDFE also produces an annual multi-faith

calendar, embossed with its logo, as well as arranging visits to different places of worship and holding Conferences and Seminars.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Training should be kept simple with the aim of giving people a basic grounding in different faiths. It is important to ask questions. There are no stupid questions. There are just questions to which people feel the need for answers.
- 'Modelling' diversity is important. It is helpful to use workshops to get people to see interaction between the different faiths, working together as a team.
- There are various strands within any religious tradition. Even within the same strand, there exist differences in beliefs between different individuals. There are a variety of personal beliefs.
- It is important to develop a 'marketplace' for training resources and to try to secure funding from local authorities.
- The Plymouth Centre has been developing booklets and DVDs, and Suffolk Inter Faith Resource has also been producing resources. The Plymouth Centre has established a 'resources room' with key artefacts in order to establish their presence.
- There is a level of ignorance in society about the variety of religious beliefs, for example, not recognising the importance of using different serving spoons for meat and vegetarian food.
- Society is becoming increasingly secular and faith communities may have a role to play in helping to fix our 'broken society'.
- The Islamic Foundation organises training programmes, mainly of an Islamic character. There can be a dilemma in producing suitable reading material. There is often not enough literature for different

age groups. How do we produce literature which leads students to participate in inter faith activity? There is a lot of ignorance and misunderstanding of different faiths and it is important to have committed members of faith communities to explain their faith.

- More use should be made of modern technology in training, which can be more effective in reaching out to people than traditional reading material. The Institute of Jainology has a website, ([learnjainism.org](http://learnjainism.org)), which educates students mainly through fun quizzes, and supports teachers with teaching notes. The Institute is currently working on a giant online encyclopaedia, containing 450 e-books.
- Because of concerns for dietary reasons over shared cups, glasses and cutlery, it is better to use disposable utensils.
- The website of All Faiths and None (AFAN) explores issues such as the perspective on violence of different faiths.

The following key points were identified for feedback:

- The importance of having a direct experience of meeting people of other faiths; there is a need for 'textpeople' as well as textbooks.
- The importance of personal conversations in transforming our understanding.
- The need for training to be done at a basic, simple level. But it cannot be completed in a single half-day session and has to be a long-term process.
- The importance of having different individuals to present their perspectives on a religious tradition in or

## Workshop 4

### Involving young people in local inter faith programmes

**Facilitator:** Ramona Kauth, Birmingham Council of Faiths

**Presenters:** Dr Phil Henry, Director, Multi-Faith Centre at Derby University

**The Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi, Faith Network 4 Manchester**

**Ramona Kauth** highlighted the importance of involving young people in inter faith work. They have the potential to offer inter faith groups a special kind of vitality and it is important to remember that this work must be handed over to the next generation. She then introduced the speakers, Revd Charles Kwaku-Odoi from Faith Network 4 Manchester and Dr Phil Henry from the Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby.

**The Revd Kwaku-Odoi** began by introducing his organisation. Faith Network 4 Manchester (FN4M) has a youth arm called Faith Youth Manchester, which organises events under the banner 'Coexist'. The young people involved came up with the name for the group and the logo, consisting of faith symbols linked to form the word Coexist. The relationship between FN4M and Coexist is to partner and support the projects in which the young people choose to be involved. For example, Coexist was involved in the project 'Love music, hate Racism' as well as starting a group to oppose homophobia, and FN4M provided support for both of these initiatives. Mr Kwaku-Odoi said it was important that the young people had ownership of their group and the projects they pursued. Coexist had held several events and projects, including a discussion of key questions regarding faith, a competition with a £500 – £1000 award for designing an inter faith project, and a game prepared for schools called 'In Your Faith' consisting of cards listing a series of key beliefs, to be matched by a card with the name of the correct faith. (A copy of his PowerPoint slides are at the end of this workshop note.)

**Dr Phil Henry** talked about the inter faith youth project he had started in 2009 at the

Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby. This project was supported by Volunteering England, and was one of five projects aimed at encouraging young people aged 16 to 25 to become involved in volunteering. The project resulted in the creation of a young people's inter faith group. He introduced **Alnazir Kuri** and **Shazia Parveen**, two young people from the inter faith group and asked them to talk about their involvement. They shared their experiences of becoming part of the inter faith group through friends, and as a result, creating friendships they would not otherwise have made and gaining leadership skills.

Dr Henry said that the main objectives of the Derby project were to: conduct leadership and diversity training; run an inter faith football league; hold an intergenerational activity; and, lastly, to celebrate inter faith work through having a presence at a local South Asian festival. The group had already achieved, or were making plans to achieve, each of these. He emphasised that this particular inter faith youth project was different from other youth focused projects that may focus on schools, as the young people they worked with are from an older age range. He hoped that, although the project was ending in August, the young people would continue their involvement in inter faith activity, perhaps participating in Inter Faith Week or joining the Derby Inter Faith Forum.

Individual participants in the workshop then made the following points:

- Experiences of engaging with SACREs on inter faith issues varied across the room with some people having had a very positive experience, and others finding



- As a positive experience with local SACREs, the example was given of the Faith Ambassadors, a project run by Bolton Inter Faith Council.
- ‘Connectivity’ was raised as one of the main issues when seeking to engage with young people. The internet was seen as an important tool, as well as using any already established contacts to encourage more involvement.
- Inter faith groups are often run by people who are already stretched beyond their capacity, and if no contacts with young people already exist it might be a challenge to find the time to develop these.
- The issue of ownership is very important. Young people must be allowed to develop their own initiatives and to run risks in the process.
- Providing young people with training and opportunities for empowerment is also very important.
- Much of the inter faith work involving young people is happening at a local level. It would be good to have more national and regional support specifically for work with young people.
- In a university setting, students are older and their outlook can be rather more academic, while in urban youth work young people are more inclined to enjoy activity-based programmes.
- Key words are connectivity, innovation, listening and engagement rather than control.



## FYM Partnership Working

• **Love Music Hate Racism** - <http://lovemusichateracism.com/>



### • Queerstianity

- Formed by school children to support friends who had been deeply hurt by hate messages preached in the name of Jesus on Market Street against Muslims, Homosexuals and others.

• **Local Youth Clubs & Organisations**



## CO-e-i-o-t Awards

### Funding for Young People's Inter-faith Innovation in Greater Manchester

- Encourage young people to design, develop and deliver new ideas for inter-faith projects or activities
- Award amount between £500 and £1,500
- Projects/Activities must improve understanding, respect and co-operation among young people



Members of Queerstianity at the Manchester City Centre



## CO-e-i-o-t IN YOUR FACE

### Queerstianity

The Bishop of Manchester with the founders of Queerstianity, and Revd David Gray (FN4M Sec)



## IN YOUR FACE

- Schools Project
- Family of Faith Cards
- Common Themes across 10 faiths- Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Jainism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism & Zoroastrianism



## CO-e-i-o-t Events

**An opportunity to directly talk with other young people about your faith identity and how it influences your view of the world.**

- How does your faith impact on your political views?
- How do you want your views to be heard?
- Do adults treat young people with enough respect?
- Do school, colleges and youth groups focus on faith enough?
- Do you get turned on by faith, or not?
- Do youth services provide what you and your friends need?
- What other issues are you passionate about?



Faith Network 4 Manchester



## IN YOUR FACE





- Thanks
- Questions/Comments



## Workshop 5

### Multi media approaches to making the work known

**Facilitator:** Jyoti Mehta, Institute of Jainology, Young Jains and Inter Faith Network

**Executive Committee member**

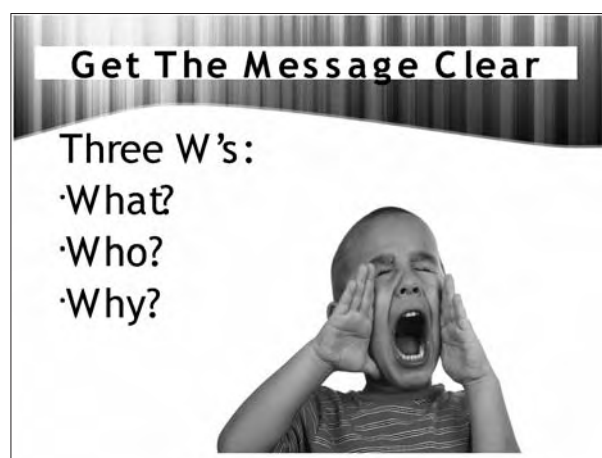
**Presenters:** Paresh Solanki, Assistant Director (Communications and Development), Inter Faith Network,

Selina Brown, Executive Communications Officer, West Midlands Faiths Forum

**Jyoti Mehta** welcomed participants to the workshop.

**Paresh Solanki**, Assistant Director (Communications and Development) of the Inter Faith Network, said that new media approaches were developing rapidly. Nowadays even schoolchildren had websites of their own. His own 8 year old nephew was typical! He shared his own experience of making a film in Italy 20 years ago, about an educational institution in a small town. *Time Magazine* had run a story on this small Italian village, which subsequently led to the development of its small region into a major tourist area. The education institution in question had become very successful, with many conferences being organised there. This development demonstrates the power of the media, where one magazine article led to major development of a small region. If you embrace the media, it can be a tremendous – and cheap and efficient – means of promoting your organisation and its work. If you do not engage with the media (eg campaigns, complaints), then the media will be likely to ignore you.

**Selina Brown** offered a PowerPoint presentation on 'You Doing, Them Knowing', which provided tips for engaging with the media. Her slides follow.





## Print Media

### Newspapers & Magazines

#### Tips:

- Who are you targeting?
- Local, National, Trade/Specialist
- Get journalist details, make contact via phone and email
- Create Press Release:
- Send BEFORE and AFTER event
- make it stand out, be different, be interesting, be creative.
- Who, What, Why, When and Where
- Include Photos



## Promotional Material

### Flyers and Posters

#### Tips:

- Who, What, Why, When and Where
- Include Photo
- Be creative
- Distribution
- Email
- Local Community
- Word Of Mouth



## Broadcast Media

### Television and Radio

#### Tips:

- Do research
- Find your local radio and television networks - MAKE CONTACT
- Send Press Releases
- Human Interest
- Make it timely
- Radio Advertisements



## Forward Planning

### "He who fails to plan, plans to fail"

#### Tips:

- Media Strategy
- Calendar Of Events
- National Days
- Training
- Contact Faiths Forum's
- Your not alone!
- Partnership Work: Public Services



## New Media

### Internet, Mobile Phones, Email, Podcasts, DVD, CD Roms

#### Tips:

- Interactive
- Visual/Audio/Video
- Regularly Updated
- Short and sweet
- New methods
- Text Messages
- Podcasts
- BlackBerry/Ipod messages



## Social Media

### Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Flickr, Wordpress

"Social media essentially is a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online"

#### Benefits:

- Get message out faster - to more people
- Engagement with Target Audience
- Low Cost
- Brand Building
- Awareness - Current trends, possible links



In discussion, the following points were made:

- Many people are not familiar with many types of media – solve this problem with training.
- Use Facebook accounts – for yourself and your organisation – to advertise events.
- Retain communication on paper for use with older people.
- Help those who want to access social media.
- Young people are forgetting how to use a phone or write a letter – they know how to talk to a computer but not a person.
- There is a need to link personal contact together with technology.
- It is important to invest in social media – reaching out to people, fundraising – but



the downside is that there are some ‘bad guys’ out there – you need to know who and what is correct.

- Faith organisations should use media to get their stories out there, otherwise someone else will.
- It is important to set up an email system in a way that makes it quick to browse through the large number of emails which now come in daily.
- Social and new media are cheap and efficient means of reaching large numbers of people and raising awareness.
- ‘Upsides’ and ‘downsides’ of different types of media. Some are more time-consuming. Others such as the new and social media are open to misuse by troublemakers who put up provocative content. You have to ensure quality control, to avoid upsetting people.
- The new media is here to stay. If you do not engage with it and embrace it by using it in a positive way to put your message across, it will leave you by the wayside.

## Workshop 6

### National faith communities and support for local inter faith work.

**Facilitator: Monsignor Andrew Faley, Assistant General Secretary, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and Inter Faith Network Executive Committee member**

**Presenter: Philip Rosenberg, Interfaith Officer, Board of Deputies of British Jews**

**With brief responding reflections from:**

**Dr Joy Barrow, Inter Faith Relations Officer, Methodist Church in Britain; and**

**Ramesh Pattni, Chair, Hindu-Christian Forum and Interfaith Officer, Hindu Forum of Britain**

**Monsignor Andrew Faley** welcomed participants to the workshop. He noted the presence of a number of key practitioners in the inter faith world and said how important it was that this topic was being given this level of attention. He then introduced presenters:

**Philip Rosenberg**, Interfaith Officer of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD), a cross-community body; **Dr Joy Barrow**, Inter Faith Relations Officer, Methodist Church in Britain; and **Ramesh Pattni**, Chair, Hindu-Christian Forum and Interfaith Officer, Hindu Forum of Britain.

**Philip Rosenberg** said that it was very important that national faith community bodies “led from the front” and offered a model of what needs to happen to build good inter faith relations. He noted that the Board of Deputies of British Jews had participated in 20 events during the 2009 Inter Faith Week.

He said that there was an increasing and welcome mainstreaming by national faith communities, and other national organisations such as the National Union of Students, of inter faith activity with the appointment by some of designated inter faith officers. This was a very important development. So, too, was the production of national documents such as *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*, published earlier this year by the Catholic Church in England and Wales, because national bodies are particularly well placed to add value because of their ‘authority’ and communication routes. He cited, for example, an earlier presentation by the Mosques and Imams

National Advisory Board, which was seeking to develop work to engage local imams in inter faith issues.

Mr Rosenberg referred to a recent report prepared for the Board of Deputies of British Jews on the inter faith engagement of the Jewish community. This had been a useful survey of what was happening on the ground. National bodies can be supportive of local activity and can help spread the message further afield. He added that there is, however, a need to remember the limitations of the national; and national organisations need to learn from the local.

**Dr Joy Barrow**, the Inter Faith Relations Officer of the Methodist Church in Britain, emphasised the importance of mutual relationships between the local and national. The Methodist Church is arranged in Districts and governed by ‘Conference’ which makes the official decisions. Without support from the Church leadership it would not be possible to take the work of inter faith relations forward. She explained that in 1972 the Methodist Conference received a report on the use of church premises by people of other faiths and this had led to the establishment in 1982 of the Inter Divisional Connexional Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths. It was approximately 15 years later that a National Inter Faith Relations Officer was appointed. Dr Barrow explained that she has a 4-year appointment in this post. Its holder needs to have a real commitment to inter faith relations. Work on inter faith relations can be a calling. Her role

is, first, to represent the Methodist Church in its relations with religions other than Christianity (which is defined as the eight other faiths which are member religions of the Inter Faith Network) and, second, to get the Methodist community actively involved in inter faith relations and to provide them with support and resources. It is a 'continuing journey'. She had recently surveyed her Methodist District inter faith relations link people about what they would find helpful in their work. They had said they wanted web-based materials. She mentioned her inter faith relations blog (on the Methodist Church's 'Open to the World' webpages). <http://interfaithrelationsjourney.blogspot.com>.

Dr Barrow added that a current theme of work in the Methodist Church is around 'discipleship'; promoting good inter faith relations is an essential part of Christian discipleship.

**Ramesh Pattni** explained that the Hindu Forum of Britain is an umbrella body with over 430 member organisations. It has recognised the need for a strategy to link the national level to local grassroots bodies and is developing a structure within the national body to achieve this. It also aims to transfer national skills for use at the local level. Two-way communications are very important for this. The four vice presidents of the Forum visit local centres. Local bodies come in three types: temples; broad community organisations; and organisations with specialist functions. The Forum is working on the question of how best to bring people together and develop working partnerships with the different types of body, and is trying to find resources to achieve this.

Moving on to comment on the role of the Hindu-Christian Forum, Mr Pattni noted that funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government had been found for the Hindu-Christian Forum to undertake a research exercise into relationships at local level and to further inform the national organisation about its structure and function

## Points made in discussion

- The mutual connectedness of national and local inter faith work were noted. Some felt that the local needed little national support; others saw this support as more significant.
- Examples were mentioned of support and resourcing at national level, including, for example, work in training clergy and support for SACRE representatives.
- National endorsement of local inter faith work is important.
- Work with SACREs is very important.
- National faith community organisations vary greatly in their structures, for example, the Hindu Forum of Britain and the Board of Deputies and the Church of England.
- There may be more similarity between faith communities at local, rather than at national, level.
- In the Church of England, one of the advantages of a national involvement lies in the equipping of clergy. There is a need to ensure that inter faith relations is covered in the syllabi of theological training colleges.
- There has to be a sense that all faith communities involved in inter faith work are equally valued and that it is not just the agenda of some communities or is beneficial to just a few. Where there is not a sense of this general value, people can be reluctant to get involved.
- Taking part in inter faith projects or training in inter faith skills should be encouraged as a positive career move for young people.
- Religious Education in schools is very important as it helps young people understanding more about the different beliefs of others in their society.

- In some faith communities there remains, in some quarters, a continuing suspicion and hesitation about inter faith activity; and these need to be combated through a lead being taken at national level.

## Workshop 7

### Inter Faith Week: Looking back to 2009 and forward to this year's Week

**Facilitator:** David Vane, Buddhist member and Secretary, Southampton Council of Faiths

**Presenters:** The Revd Alan Bayes, Chair, Inter Faith Council for Wales

Discussion in this workshop was based on the report of Inter Faith Week 2009 in England, which can be found online at [www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/ifweek2009report.pdf](http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/ifweek2009report.pdf), and the report of Inter Faith Week 2009 in Wales, which can be found online at [www.interfaithwales.org/userfiles/files/ICW%20Final%20Inter%20Faith%20Week%20Report%2017mar10\(2\).pdf](http://www.interfaithwales.org/userfiles/files/ICW%20Final%20Inter%20Faith%20Week%20Report%2017mar10(2).pdf).

Inter Faith Week activities led by the Southampton Council of Faiths can be found on page 35 and media coverage of the Southampton area on page 75 of the report on Inter Faith Week in England.



# Participant list

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Luton Council of Faiths

**Mr Ziya Adilov**

Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Bhai Sahib Dr Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia**

Religions for Peace (UK)

**Dr Manazir Ahsan MBE**

Islamic Foundation

**Ms Anna Allen**

Community Development Foundation

**Mr Nigel Anthony**

Inter-faith Council for Wales

**Mr Tajammul Baig**

Greenwich Multi-Faith Forum

**Mrs Cynthia Bailey**

Wellingborough Inter Faith Group

**Mr George Ballentyne**

Leicester Council of Faiths

**Dr Joy Barrow**

Christians Aware

**The Revd Alan Bayes**

Inter-faith Council for Wales

**Daphne Beale**

Loughborough Council of Faiths

**Marigold Bentley**

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**Mrs Judith Bruni**

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Buddhist Society

**Mr Stephen Innes**  
Crawley Interfaith Network

**Mr James Jackson**  
Three Faiths Forum

**Ms Pramila Kaur**  
Scottish Inter Faith Council

**Ms Ramona Kauth**  
Birmingham Council of Faiths

**Mr Ryad Khodabocus**  
Luton Council of Faiths

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**Mr Yann Lovelock**  
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**The Revd Prebendary Michael Metcalf**  
National Association of SACREs

**Mrs Stella Michael-Sargeant**  
Department for Communities and Local Government

**Mr Timothy Miller**  
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**Mr Dorab Mistry**  
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

**Mr Anil Kumar Mitra**  
Hillingdon Inter Faith Network

**Ms Katharina Muller**  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

**Mr John Murray**  
Nottingham Inter Faith Council

**Mr Neville Murray**  
Islington Faiths Forum

**Mrs Ravinder Kaur Nijjar**  
Scottish Inter Faith Council

**Ms Mehri Niknam MBE**  
Joseph Interfaith Foundation

**Miss Yi Ling Ong**  
Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Miss Stella Opoku-Owusu**  
Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Mr Chan Parmar**  
Bolton Interfaith Council

**Miss Shazia Parveen**  
Multi Faith Centre, Derby University

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Bolton Interfaith Council

**Mr David Paterson**  
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**Mr Ramesh Pattni**  
Hindu-Christian Forum  
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**Mr Brian Pearce OBE**  
Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Mr Martin Pendergast**  
Interfaith Alliance UK

**Miss Hannah Pennock**  
Community Development Foundation

**Rabbi Alan Plancey**  
Office of the Chief Rabbi

**Mr Alan Rainer**  
London Society of Jews and Christians

**Ms Fatima Rajina Joseph**  
Interfaith Foundation

**Dr VP Narayan Rao**

Hindu Council (UK)

**Maulana M Shahid Raza OBE**

Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board

**The Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern**

Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Ms Fakhara Rehman**

Kirklees Faiths Forum

**Mrs Christa Rennie**

Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)

**Mr Philip Rosenberg**

Board of Deputies of British Jews

**Mr Reynold Rosenberg**

Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group

**Cllr David Routledge MBE**

Hillingdon Inter Faith Network

**Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid**

Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group  
and Muslim Council of Britain

**Mr Resham Singh Sandhu MBE**

Faiths Forum for the East Midlands/Leicester  
Council of Faiths

**Dr Harshad Sanghrajka**

Institute of Jainology

**The Revd Steven Saxby**

Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum

**Ven Bogoda Seelawimala**

Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB

**Dr Natubhai Shah**

Jain Samaj Europe

**Mr Ramesh Shah**

Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Mrs Sabiha Shahzad**

Greenwich Multi-Faith Forum

**Dr Maureen Sier**

Scottish Inter Faith Council (seconded to  
Scottish Government Equality Unit)

**Mr Harmander Singh**

Redbridge Faiths Forum

**Mr Jagjiwan Singh**

Network of Sikh Organisations  
and Hounslow Friends of Faith

**Dr Indarjit Singh CBE**

Network of Sikh Organisations

**Mr Kashmir Singh Rajput**

Bradford District Faiths Forum

**Mr Tirath Singh**

Bedford Council of Faiths

**Mr Paresch Solanki**

Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Rabbi Mark Solomon**

Interfaith Alliance UK and London Society of  
Jews and Christians

**Mrs Manjula Sood MBE**

Leicester Council of Faiths

**Ms Patricia Stoa**

Faiths Forum for the East Midlands

**Mr Duncan Struthers**

Hillingdon Inter Faith Network

**The Revd Bruce Stuart**

Kingston Inter Faith Forum

**Mr Andrew Stunell OBE, MP**

Department for Communities and Local  
Government

**Ms Bharti Tailor**

Hindu Forum of Britain

**Bishop Festus Tete-Djawu**

Council of African and Afro-Caribbean  
Churches

**The Revd Kevin Tingay**

Faithnetsouthwest

**Mr Venilal Vaghela**  
Brent Multi-Faith Forum

**Mrs Deanna Van der Velde**  
Newcastle Council of Faiths

**Mr David Vane**  
Southampton Council of Faiths

**Mrs Anne Vince**  
United Religions Initiative (UK)

**The Revd Mike Walling**  
Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action

**Canon Guy Wilkinson**  
Church of England

**Mrs Amy Willshire**  
Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum

**Mr Vivian Wineman**  
Board of Deputies of British Jews

**Mr Andrew Worth**  
Brent Multi-Faith Forum



# Member Organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2010/11

## **Faith Community Representative Bodies**

Baha'i Community of the UK  
 BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha  
 Board of Deputies of British Jews  
 British Muslim Forum  
 Buddhist Society  
 Churches' Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland  
 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland  
 Churches Together in England  
 Committee for Relations with Other Religions, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales  
 Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK)  
 General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches  
 Hindu Council (UK)  
 Hindu Forum of Britain  
 Islamic Cultural Centre  
 Jain Samaj Europe  
 Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain (Association of Muslim Scholars)  
 Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board  
 Muslim Council of Britain  
 National Council of Hindu Temples (UK)  
 Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)  
 Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)  
 Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations  
 Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB  
 Tiratna Buddhist Community  
 Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)  
 World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League  
 World Islamic Mission (UK)  
 Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

## **Educational and Academic Bodies**

Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme  
 Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue, Heythrop College  
 Centre for the Study of Interreligious Relations, University of Birmingham  
 Community Religions Project, University of Leeds  
 Institute of Jainology  
 Islamic Foundation  
 National Association of SACREs  
 Religious Education Council of England and Wales  
 Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education  
 Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter  
 Wales Association of SACREs  
 Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths

## **Inter Faith Organisations**

Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum  
 Scottish Inter Faith Council  
 Inter-faith Council for Wales/Cyngor Cyd-Ffydd Cymru  
 East of England Faiths Council  
 faithnetsouthwest  
 Faiths Forum for the East Midlands  
 North East Regional Faiths Network  
 Northwest Forum of Faiths  
 South East England Faith Forum  
 West Midlands Faiths Forum  
 Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum

Alif Aleph UK  
 Christian Muslim Forum  
 Christians Aware Interfaith Programme  
 Coexist Foundation  
 Coexistence Trust  
 Council of Christians and Jews  
 Council of Dharmic Faiths  
 East of England Faiths Agency  
 Interfaith Action (INTERACT)  
 Interfaith Alliance UK  
 International Association for Religious  
 Freedom (British Chapter)  
 International Interfaith Centre  
 Joseph Interfaith Foundation  
 London Society of Jews and Christians  
 Minorities of Europe Inter Faith Action  
 Programme  
 Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby  
 Religions for Peace (UK)  
 Scriptural Reasoning  
 Society for Dialogue and Action  
 St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and  
 Peace  
 St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in  
 a Multi Faith Society  
 Three Faiths Forum  
 Tony Blair Faith Foundation  
 United Religions Initiative (UK)  
 Westminster Interfaith  
 World Congress of Faiths

#### **Local Inter Faith Groups**

Altrincham Inter Faith Group  
 Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum  
 Barnet Multi-Faith Forum  
 Bedford Council of Faiths  
 Birmingham Council of Faiths  
 Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum  
 Blackpool Faith Forum  
 Bolton Interfaith Council  
 Bradford Concord Interfaith Society  
 Bradford District Faiths Forum

Brent Interfaith  
 Brent Multi-Faith Forum  
 Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group  
 Bristol Inter Faith Group  
 Bristol Multi-Faith Forum  
 Buckinghamshire Forum of Faiths  
 Building Bridges in Burnley  
 Muslim-Christian Forum (Bury)  
 Calderdale Interfaith Council  
 Cambridge Inter-Faith Group  
 Camden Faith Communities Partnership  
 Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action  
 Cardiff Interfaith Association  
 Cheltenham Inter Faith  
 Clapham and Stockwell Faith Forum  
 Coventry Multi-Faith Forum  
 Crawley Interfaith Network  
 Faiths Together in Croydon  
 Cumbria Interfaith Forum  
 Sharing of Faiths (Dacorum)  
 Forum of Faiths for Derby  
 Devon Faith and Belief Forum  
 Doncaster Interfaith  
 Dudley Borough Interfaith Network  
 Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum  
 Exeter Faith and Belief Group  
 Gateshead Inter Faith Forum  
 Greenwich Multi-Faith Forum  
 Hampshire Interfaith Network  
 Harrow Inter Faith Council  
 Hastings and District Interfaith Forum  
 Hillingdon Inter Faith Network  
 Horsham Interfaith Forum  
 Hounslow Friends of Faith  
 Huddersfield Inter Faith Council  
 Hull and East Riding Interfaith  
 Inter Faith Isle of Man  
 Interfaith Swansea  
 Islington Faiths Forum  
 Keighley Interfaith Group  
 Kingston Inter Faith Forum

Kirklees Faiths Forum	Rugby Inter Faith Forum
Faiths Together in Lambeth	Sandwell Multi-Faith Network
Lancashire Forum of Faiths	Sheffield Faiths Forum
Faith in Lancaster	Sheffield Inter Faith
Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship	South London Inter Faith Group
Leeds Faiths Forum	South Shropshire Interfaith Forum
Leicester Council of Faiths	Southampton Council of Faiths
Lincoln Inter-Faith Forum	Southwark Multi Faith Forum
Liverpool Faith Network	Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource
Loughborough Council of Faiths	Faiths United (Tameside)
Luton Council of Faiths	Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Group
Faith Network for Manchester	Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum
Medway Inter Faith Action Forum	Valleys Faith Forum
Merseyside Council of Faiths	Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum
Middlesbrough Council of Faiths	Wandsworth Multi-Faith Network
Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)	Warrington Council of Faiths
Milton Keynes Council of Faiths	Warwick District Faiths Forum
Moseley Inter Faith Group	Watford Inter Faith Association
Newcastle Council of Faiths	Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Newham Association of Faiths	Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group
Newham Faith Sector Forum	West Wiltshire Interfaith Group
North Herts Faith Forum	Westminster Faith Exchange
North Kirklees Inter-Faith Council	Whalley Range (Manchester) Inter Faith Group
North Staffordshire Forum of Faiths	Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum
Northampton Inter Faith Forum	Wolverhampton Inter Faith Council
Norwich InterFaith Link	Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum
Nottingham Inter Faith Council	Wycombe Sharing of Faiths
Oldham Inter Faith Forum	York Interfaith Group
Oxford Round Table of Religions	
Building Bridges Pendle – Interfaith Community Project	
Peterborough Inter-Faith Council	
Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity	
Portsmouth Inter Faith Forum	
Preston Faith Forum	
Reading Inter-Faith Group	
Redbridge Council of Faiths	
Redbridge Faith Forum	
Rochdale Multi Faith Partnership	
Rossendale Faith Partnership	

## **Cover photographs**

### *Front*

‘Living Library’ – An opportunity to learn about other faiths by ‘borrowing’ a person of faith from the library (Photo: Wycombe Sharing of Faiths)

Youth groups from different faiths compete at a local inter faith football tournament (Photo: the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby)

Wandsworth Multi-Faith Network co-production with the Public Sector (Photo: South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust)

Multi faith ‘Sadbhavna Sangatee/Goodwill Gathering’ (Photo: Bradford District Faiths Forum)

‘Hands on Faith’ – Jewish bread making workshop at Inter Faith Week event (Photo: Kirklees Faiths Forum)

### *Back*

Launch of Luton faith map (Photo: Luton Council of Faiths)

Inverness and Skye inter faith picnic (Photo: Inverness Inter Faith Group)

Inter faith concert (Photo: Nottingham Inter Faith Council)

Photographs on the cover illustrate some of the many kinds of local inter faith activity in the UK today. Copyright of the photographs belongs to those bodies credited.

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