

NOTICE OF MEETING

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
Thursday 8 July 2010, 5.00 pm
Bedford Room, Education Centre, Easthampstead Park**

To: The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

The Free Churches (3)

Mrs Paula Ridgway
Mrs Irene Robinson
Mr John Baidam

The Roman Catholic Church (2)

Mrs Anne Gibbons
Mrs Carol Nicholls

Other Religions (5)

Joel Roszykiewicz	Buddhist
Mrs Kusum Trikha	Hindu
Rabbi Zvi Solomons	Jewish
Arfan Rashid	Muslim
Mrs Ranjit Kaur Bilkhu	Sikh

The Church of England (4)

Mr Gordon Anderson
Mrs Maureen Beadsley
David Fawcett
Mrs Julie Mintern

Associations representing Teachers (6)

Mrs Samantha Hunt	ATL
Mrs Kathleen Nugent	NAHT
Ms Felicity Allen	NASUWT
Mr Colin Hickson	NUT
Ms Madeline Diver	VOICE
Vacancy	SHA

Bracknell Forest Council (5)

Cllr Andy Blatchford
Cllr Marc Brunel-Walker
Cllr Mrs Dorothy Hayes
Cllr Ian Leake
Cllr Cliff Thompson

Co-opted Members (2) (Non-voting)

Dr Kathy Hadfield	Baha'i
Revd Michael Bentley	

ALISON SANDERS
Director of Corporate Services

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS

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If you require further information, please contact: Liz Sanneh
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Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
Thursday 8 July 2010, 5.00 pm
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AGENDA

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1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence (prayer to be led by Dr Kathy Hadfield)	
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 March 2010.	1 - 4
3. Matters Arising not already on the agenda	
4. Faith and Belief Mapping in Bracknell Forest (a) Presentation by Chris Cowap, Partnership Development Manager, BFVA (b) SACRE representative at Steering Group meeting on 14 July 2010	5 - 32
5. The role and responsibility of SACRE	33 - 34
6. SACRE membership matters (a) Presentation of training certificates (b) Request by the British Humanist Association for Group A membership	35 - 38
7. RE Resources To receive a review and update on Bracknell Forest SACRE resources	
8. Transforming Religious Education To receive the Ofsted Report on RE 2006-2009	39 - 46
9. The monitoring of RE and CW in Bracknell Forest Schools To receive an update on the way forward	
10. The NASACRE Annual General Meeting To receive a report from Jo Fageant	47 - 50
11. Berkshire Joint SACREs' Conference feedback To receive feedback from 15 June 2010	
12. The next Locally Agreed Syllabus review	

13. **Any Other Business**

14. **Dates of Future Meetings**

Wednesday 10 November 2010 (fixed)

Wednesday 9 March 2011 (proposed)

Thursday 7 July 2011 (proposed)

Thursday 10 November 2011 (proposed)

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**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
10 MARCH 2010
5.00 - 6.25 PM**



Present:

Mr Gordon Anderson (Chairman)	Church of England
Mrs Paula Ridgway	Free Church
Mrs Carol Nicholls	Roman Catholic Church
Mr Joel Roszykiewicz	Buddhist Faith
Mrs Kusum Trikha	Hindu Faith
Rabbi Zvi Solomons	Jewish Faith
Mr Arfan Rashid	Muslim Faith
Mrs Ranjit Bilkhu	Sikh Faith
Mr David Fawcett	Church of England
Mrs Kathleen Nugent	NAHT
Ms Felicity Allen	NASUWT
Mr Colin Hickson	NUT
Cllr Andy Blatchford	Bracknell Forest Council
Cllr Mrs Dorothy Hayes	Bracknell Forest Council
Cllr Cliff Thompson	Bracknell Forest Council

Co-optees (non-voting)

Dr Kathy Hadfield	Baha'i Faith
Rev Michael Bentley	

In attendance

Jo Fageant	SACRE Associate Adviser
Martin Surrell	Senior Adviser, Children, Young People and Learning
Liz Sanneh	Democratic Services

129. Welcome and Introductions (opening words/prayer to be led by Arfan Rashid)

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members, and in particular Mrs Ranjit Bilkhu, who was attending as the Sikh representative. Introductions around the table followed.

Arfan Rashid opened the meeting, speaking of charity, alms, and acts of kindness. The Chairman thanked Mr Rashid for his contribution.

130. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Maureen Beadsley, Anne Gibbons, Samantha Hunt, and Julie Mintern.

131. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November had been circulated and were agreed as a true record.

132. **Matters Arising not already on the agenda**

Training

Jo Fageant confirmed that training of new members had been undertaken. Mr Rashid confirmed that this had been useful.

Resources Centre and Artefacts

Ranelagh School had been sent the report on the Bracknell Forest SACRE loans service, but no response had been received from Ranelagh concerning their collection.

Examination Results

The Chairman had forwarded the request for examination results to be broken down by school to the Chief Adviser – Learning and Achievement.

Annual Report

The SACRE Annual Report 2008/2009 had been sent to QCDA, and was now on the Bracknell Forest website.

133. **SACRE Membership Update**

The Chairman told the meeting that Madeline Diver had been in touch with Voice, who had written in October nominating her as their representative on SACRE. However, the letter had not been received, so it was being re-sent to Bracknell Forest Council.

With regard to the Free Churches vacancy, it had been suggested that the Seventh Day Adventist church should be represented on SACRE, and the Bracknell Forest Council officers would make contact with them.

Action: Liz Sanneh

134. **The new primary curriculum and RE**

Jo Fageant spoke about the new Primary Curriculum, which was now available. There were links to this given in the agenda papers. There had been a revision of the national curriculum, but the Bracknell Forest agreed syllabus remained in place. Ms Fageant told the meeting that there was an opportunity for confusion for schools as this was part of the statutory curriculum but not part of the national curriculum. It should be considered when changing the RE syllabus. The locally-agreed curriculum was more flexible for schools, but could not stipulate how much time should be allocated to the teaching of RE in primary schools. It was possible to use wording such as “to use this syllabus effectively you may need to give 5% of teaching time to it”.

Concern was expressed by members that this was confusing. It was suggested and agreed that SACRE should issue a response to this to counter the confusion. It was suggested that this could also go to the Primary Heads meeting for update. Ms Fageant told the group that she had access to draft cross-curricular work from West Berkshire, and this resource could be made available to Bracknell Forest schools. It was agreed that she would inform the Chairman when this became available, and he would distribute it electronically.

Action: Jo Fageant/Gordon Anderson

135. **New non-statutory advice for RE**

Jo Fageant told the meeting that there was new non-statutory guidance for RE, replacing Circular 1/94. She urged members to take a close look at the document, which contained two chapters about the importance of RE, and chapter 3 was about the role and responsibilities of SACRE. It divided the role of SACRE into must-do and should-do, and was a useful document. The Chairman welcomed the clarity which this document brought. He thanked Jo Fageant for bringing it to the attention of the members.

Jo also indicated that the Chairman of the National Association of SACREs had reviewed this document, and the review would be published in the newsletter on the national website. Hard copies were available from DCSF publications.

136. **RE Resources**

Martin Surrell reported that over the past three months since November 2009, five primary schools and one special school had borrowed resources from SACRE, and the loans had gone smoothly. A suggestion was made that some of the SACRE budget might be spent on buying reference books for the loan service. Jo Fageant acknowledged that books were a valuable resource for RE teachers, but urged members to encourage teachers to go look on websites (eg RE online) where there was a wealth of resources.

Rabbi Solomons told the meeting that his synagogue provided resources for school children, which included a tour of the synagogue, samples of Jewish foods and information about Jewish lifestyles. It was necessary to book about six months in advance, but schools using this tour were very impressed by it. The Chairman reminded members that SACRE had created a directory with this type of information but was in need of updating

Jo Fageant then drew attention to the new report on resources (link in agenda) which gave information about available and frequently used RE resources.

137. **SACRE Budget**

The Chairman tabled an email from the Chief Adviser – Learning and Achievement concerning the SACRE budget. Mr Anderson expressed concern that in spite of a costed Development Plan being drawn up by SACRE, there had been no consultation with members of SACRE on the level of budget which Bracknell Forest Council planned to allow the group. However, he understood that if more than the initial £1500 was needed, it would be forthcoming.

The Chairman told the meeting that he would take up the matter of consultation on the budget with the Executive Member.

On the subject of SACRE's obligation to review the RE syllabus, Jo Fageant suggested that as the locally agreed syllabus had previously been agreed with the five SACREs in Berkshire, there would need to be a strategy to share the review. The syllabus review must begin within five years of the publication of the previous syllabus. The Chairman asked the meeting whether the members wanted to proceed with a joint review in this way again, and it was unanimously agreed. It was suggested that the initial meeting could take place at the SACRE conference in June.

138. **The Berkshire Joint SACREs' Conference - Tuesday 15 June 2010**

The Chairman told the meeting that the annual SACRE conference would take place on 16 June, 6.00 pm for 6.30 pm. Jo Fageant would email invitations via the

chairman. Bracknell Forest SACRE had an open-door approach to conference attendance, and the Chair asked that anyone who was interested in attending should register their interest with him as numbers might have to be restricted. However, if more than five people wanted to go, it was possible for people to pay their own way to attend.

139. **The Monitoring of RE and CW in Bracknell Forest Schools - update on the way forward**

Martin Surrell reported that he and Jo Fageant had discussed the monitoring, which could be achieved in two ways: the first was to use the facility of a sample of schools each year to review the quality of RE provision, which would need a half-day commitment by the schools involved. This would provide quality feedback, and over a four-year period all schools could be reviewed. There were a number of secondary school subject networks, but these had proved difficult to get off the ground. In principle it was a good model, but difficult to release teachers during the day as appropriate cover was difficult and expensive to find. The alternative would be to use a self-evaluation for which an on-line tool was available. This could potentially provide a much bigger sample. The questionnaire used for this self-evaluation was professionally produced, and provided a statistical analysis.

The Chairman suggested that both systems should be tried. Jo Fageant agreed, but suggested that getting a group together offered teachers more than just questionnaire filling would. The preferred options could be outlined at a future meeting of Bracknell Forest headteachers.

The members **AGREED** that the adviser and officer should progress this.

Action: Jo Fageant/Martin Surrell

140. **Any other business**

Paula Ridgway had attended the Faith and Belief Conference on 9 March 2010, coordinated by the Bracknell Forest Volunteer Association, exploring equality together with members of other faiths. It had been an exciting day with good representation and excellent networking opportunities. A steering group was being formed for a Faith and Belief Forum to promote community cohesion.

Rabbi Solomons commented that Basingstoke and Reading had also held a similar conference, and suggested it would be good to join with other unitary authorities for an event like this.

141. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The next meeting of the Bracknell Forest SACRE will take place on Thursday 8 July 2010.

CHAIRMAN

Bracknell Forest

Faith & Belief in Action 2010



What is the devil, after all? Just my own weaknesses, my own lack of courage, the problem I can't face, the bit of my own self I can't love. We are our own devils. I used to fight my devils in prayer, but now I send them up in jokes.

Rabbi Lionel Blue

God used the prophet Jeremiah to encourage God's people to 'get involved' with life in the city

Taken from the Old Testament

'A person's true wealth is the good he or she does in the world.'

Mohammed

Acknowledgements

First and foremost we would like to thank all those agencies who have carried out their own faith based surveys around the UK, and kindly published the results for public consumption, allowing us to expedite our own survey.

Many thanks to Madeline Diver (Bracknell Forest Christian Network) for her support and invaluable local knowledge and connections and Pastor Chris Porter of Easthampstead Baptist Church, for agreeing to be our guinea pig and road tester.

Thank you to Gordon Anderson and Paula Ridgeway for their support through the Bracknell Forest Council Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE).

To all our partners involved in the Community Cohesion arena for their continuing support.

Finally all those participants who took the time to complete the questionnaire without whom, we would not have been able to produce this report.



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Chapter 2

Introduction

Funded by Faiths in Action, this is a unique opportunity to provide a snapshot of the contribution and valuable work of the many faith and belief organisations in Bracknell Forest and show both the real and economic contribution to the borough and civil society.

The purpose of this audit is to help partners understand where and how faith communities impact the borough and its communities, and identify potential opportunities to help bring about beneficial change for Bracknell Forest residents.

Bracknell Forest covers 109 square kilometres of central Berkshire, 28 miles west of London, and includes the former New town of Bracknell, together with the village of Crowthorne and Sandhurst Town, along with a number of smaller villages and settlements. The borough's population is 113,500 (2007 estimate) and contains six parishes and 18 wards. It is made up of a mix of rural and urban areas each with its unique set of needs and issues.

The general perception of the borough is one of affluence, however, like most towns and cities across the UK, there are significant pockets of deprivation.

Culturally the population is predominantly white of Christian religion, but growing and increasingly becoming a more diverse mix. Figures from the 2001 Census reported 72% Christian, 18% no religion, 7.4% not stated, with all others totalling 2.4%.

The majority of residents consider themselves to be 'White British' in origin, however since 2001 the numbers of school pupils from minority ethnic groups has grown from 6.1% to 14% in 2008. Additional evidence shows that ethnic trends are changing, for example a growing significant and predominantly Hindu Nepali community, largely due to the presence of the Gurkha Regiment at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.

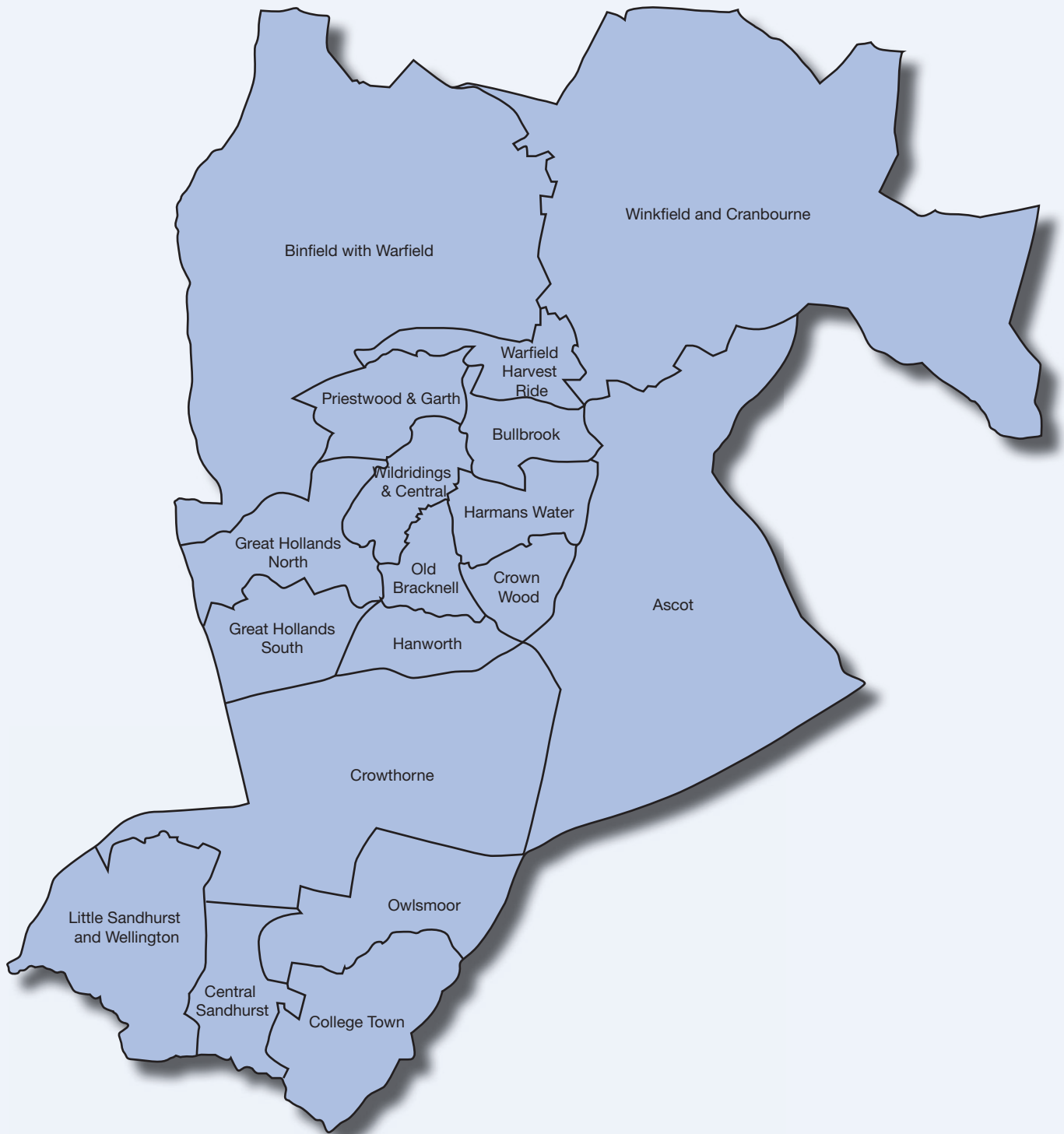
Although Bracknell Forest is less ethnically diverse than England as a whole, it is important that the speed of change in ethnicity in the Borough is recognised.

45 survey forms were sent out (following removal of duplicates and defunct groups/organisations from the data base) with a January 2010 deadline. The contents of the survey have been collated to form the basis of this report, to be delivered at the inaugural Bracknell Forest 'Faith & Belief in Action' conference Easthampstead Baptist Church on Tuesday March 9th 2010 along-side further discussion about the development of a Faith and Belief Forum.

The project is managed through Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, as a neutral and independent body, in co-operation with all relevant partners.



Wards in Bracknell Forest



Chapter 3



Methodology

The purpose of the mapping exercise is not only to show the value and benefit to Bracknell Forest but to highlight the multitude of faith and belief based organisations and the wide range of services they offer. The ultimate goal is to develop a Faith and Belief Forum to promote improved understanding, cooperation and community communication and cohesion. Bracknell Forest has the advantage of following in the footsteps of the many successful interfaith fora around the region, with a wealth of experience to share. Plus through the South East England Faiths Forum (SEEFF) based in Guildford, through the use of internet technology a wider email support network could easily be established.

Creating a fully functioning faith and belief forum can be seen as one of strategic importance and synergy across all sectors, giving all faith and belief organisations a stronger public voice. The challenge for all our different sectors, including the faith sector, is to prioritise engagement and to avoid parochialism and isolationism, together with suspicion and fear, which only serves to divide and not unite.

Every effort was made to ensure the widest distribution of survey forms to cover all known faith and belief organisations operating in Bracknell Forest. Survey forms were also sent to organisations that may have Bracknell Forest residents attending but without a base in Bracknell (unfortunately most declined to respond).

Partners

The process of publicising the mapping exercise began following the submission of the original bid to Faiths in Action in November 2008 utilising the established working partnerships already in existence. In addition, the audit was publicised with Borough partners through a number of forums that included senior officials from police, health, neighbourhood management, Bracknell Forest Council departments and voluntary and community groups. This task was carried out in advance of the sending out of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire

Many of our partner agencies were involved in the initial development of the questionnaire; the final draft was piloted with Pastor Chris Porter of Easthampstead Baptist Church and Madeline Diver Bracknell Forest Christian Network, to ensure that the questions were unambiguous and the language transferable across faiths. The contents were predominantly focused on establishing the type and level of voluntary activity occurring outside of the main acts of worship and the level of existing partnership work.

The questionnaire was initially distributed by post and subsequently followed by hand delivery and email versions on request. As an incentive to return the completed forms, a prize draw in the amount of £250 will be drawn at the conference for all completed returns.

Follow-up was carried out after 4 weeks by mail, email, telephone and face to face meetings.

Participants

Included the following participants:

- Baha'i
- Christian
- Hindu
- Muslim

Within the Christian sample, the following denominations took part:

- Anglican
- Baptist
- Church of England
- Evangelical
- Methodist
- Roman Catholic
- Seventh Day Adventist (Pentecostal)
- United Reform Church

Forms were also sent (but not returned or declined to participate) to: The Jewish Community, all surrounding local Mosques, the Humanist Society and several smaller faith organisations in Berkshire. The full list of participants can be found at appendix B.





Survey Analysis

The survey has set out to analyse and interpret the existing activity and partnership working. The data recorded should provide opportunities to:-

- Celebrate and value the work and activities of faith based organisations
- Identify those faith groups already working in partnership and willing to engage with other groups/ partners.
- Identify areas for potential co-operation.
- Identify those groups willing to develop activities that contribute to Bracknell Forest priorities.
- Identify gaps in community need and explore ways of addressing them.
- Bring together those groups willing to participate in a Faith and Belief Forum.
- Raise awareness of each others faiths and find common ground and shared vision.
- Develop a strong influential voice on behalf of faith communities.

The Challenges

An emerging picture shows that increasing numbers of faith groups are engaged in social action, serving, listening and providing holistic services to individuals and the wider community. Acknowledged for their stability and permanence, faith groups make a unique contribution, often having buildings situated at the heart of neighbourhoods with, in many cases, highly committed volunteers motivated because of the values that come out of their beliefs.

Our mapping shows that faith groups in Bracknell Forest already contribute significantly to their local communities. However, this report highlights the challenges that face Bracknell Forest and the many opportunities for improved partnership working and capacity building within the faith communities. Faith communities sometimes find it easier to work with secular partners than to cross the cultural boundaries of working with other faith traditions. This can cause issues of duplication and competition which can prevent effective joint working and, sometimes unintentionally, find faith groups competing with each other for resources and funding.

Partnership Working

Despite the promotion of faith community involvement by national and regional government, there are still misunderstandings and challenges that face partnership opportunities. Faith communities are diverse with many different belief traditions; therefore partners need to ensure that faith representation takes minority faiths into account. Working in partnership with faith groups needs to be carried out in such a way that it does not detract them from doing what they do, or compromise their faith beliefs. During the survey, some verbalised reservations and concerns that they would possibly be expected to replace the work carried out by statutory agencies culminating in a situation where these agencies would dictate the design of services, directing them into something which was never intended.

Barriers to Partnerships

Whilst most partners are open and supportive of faith community involvement, others can be unresponsive and suspicious. This suspicion with a degree of stereotyping says that, the motivation for faith communities to do what they do is to enable them to evangelise their faith. This can be particularly difficult when faith groups apply for funding, in some instances being singled out and excluded simply because of belonging to a faith community.

Capacity Building

In the majority of cases, faith groups aim to provide professional services. However, the reality for some is that resources are being stretched and overloaded by increasing demands of legislation and funding requirements. For others just starting out, there awaits a minefield of policies, processes and procedures. As we acknowledge that faith groups are increasingly helping to meet the needs of the challenges here in Bracknell Forest, we must also recognise the need to invest in their capacity.

Faith and Belief Forum

Bringing together representatives from different faith and belief traditions, the Faith and Belief Forum will seek to promote better understanding across faith groups along with improved working amongst secular partners. It will also give those Partners in the Forum a stronger voice with statutory agencies and in particular, the Community Cohesion arena.



Chapter 4

Survey Headlines

Total Forms distributed: **45**
 Number returned: **24**
 Return Rate: **53.33%**

Christian based organisations	
Church of England	4
Anglican	4
Non denominational	1
United Reformed Church	1
Fellowship of independent Evangelical Churches	1
Links to all denominations	1
Seventh Day Adventist	1
Roman Catholic	1
Methodist	1
Anglican and Methodist	1
Baptist	3
Others	
Muslim	2
Baha'i	1
Hindu	2

Total weekly attendance (Worship) **6125**
 Under 16's **1630**
 Adults **4495**
 Total number of projects **106**

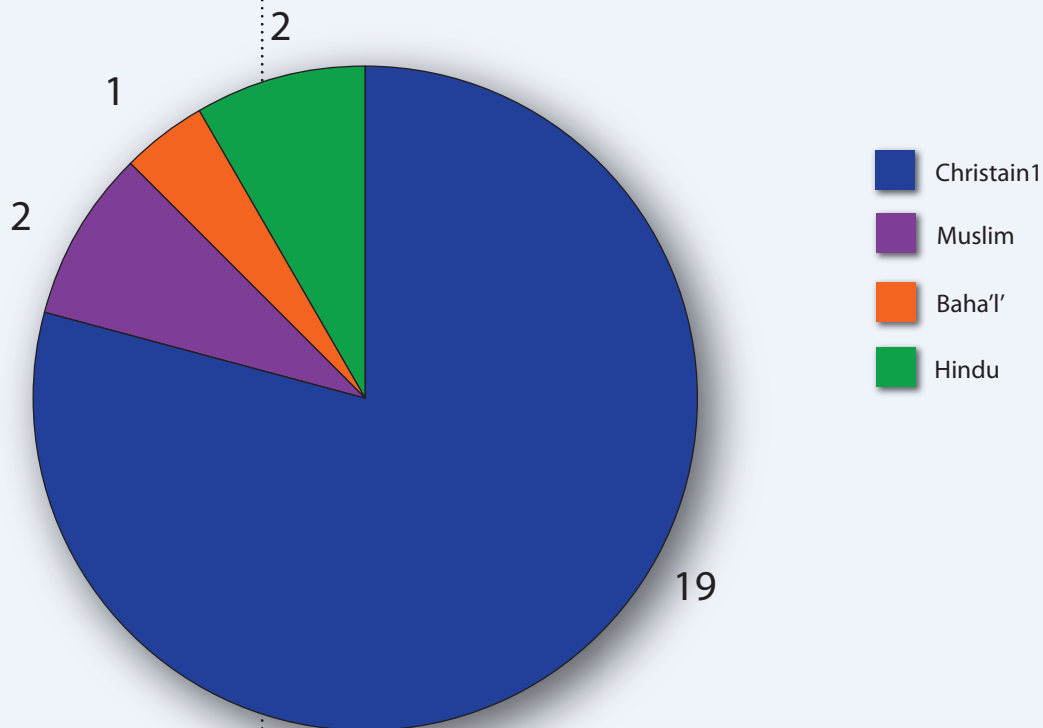
Older People	10
Parent/Mothers/Carers & Toddlers/Babies	15
Children	21
Teenagers	15
Families	3
Faith based groups	3
General/All	34
Disabled/learning difficulties	5

Number of attendees per week (services/activities) **5291**
 Number of employees **31 FTE**
15 PT
9 Others

Total number of volunteers **731**
 Total volunteers hours per week (83.88 FTE) **2067**
 Total volunteer hours per year **107,484**
 Economic contribution (national min wage £5.80) **£623,407**
 At a more realistic £10.00 per hour **£1,074,840**

Chapter 5

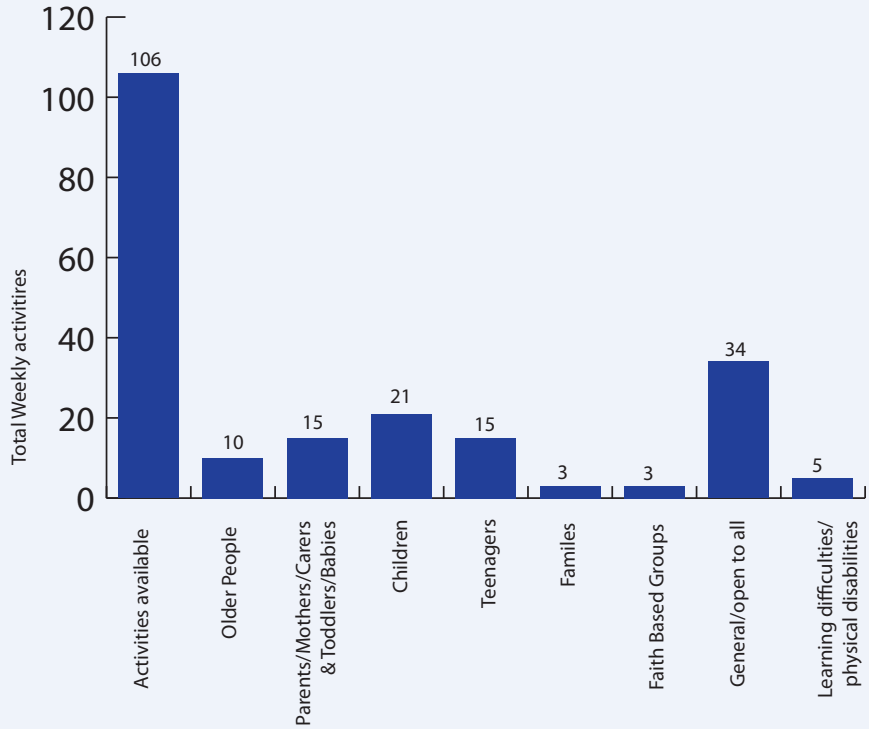
Survey Returns



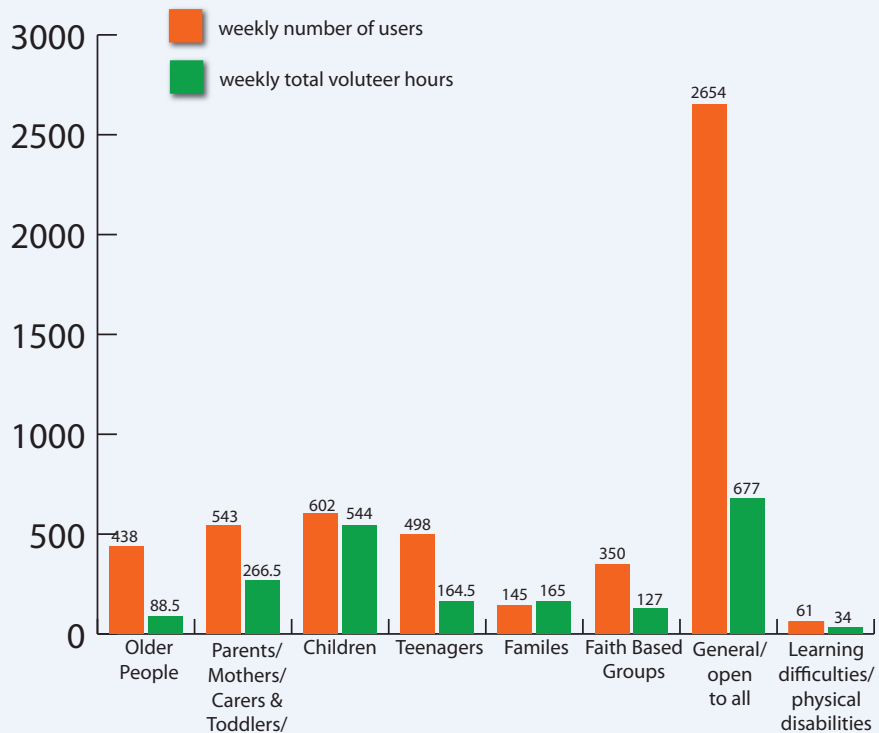
- A total of 45 survey forms were distributed, 24 were returned, giving a return rate of 53.33%.
- All respondents together have a weekly attendance of 6125 at principle acts of worship/devotion, which is approximately 5.4% of the population of Bracknell Forest. The average attendance in the UK is approximately 10%, if we take our sample as representative, this would work out at 10.16% of the Bracknell Forest population.
- Of the 24 respondents 14 have their own buildings, the others utilise community halls or members private residences.
- 12 of the respondents offer rooms for hire, 8 are fully and 4 partly compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. 11 have a hearing loop system and 13 offer dedicated parking.
- Of the 24 respondents, 8 were registered charities, with 5 in the process of applying for charitable status.

Total Weekly Activities

- All together, the responding faith organisations are involved in 106 projects/initiatives aimed at benefitting the local community, with a total of 5291 people accessing these activities.
- In an average week 602 children and young people, 438 older people, 543 parent and toddlers, 498 teenagers, 145 families, 61 people with learning difficulties/physical disabilities access these activities.

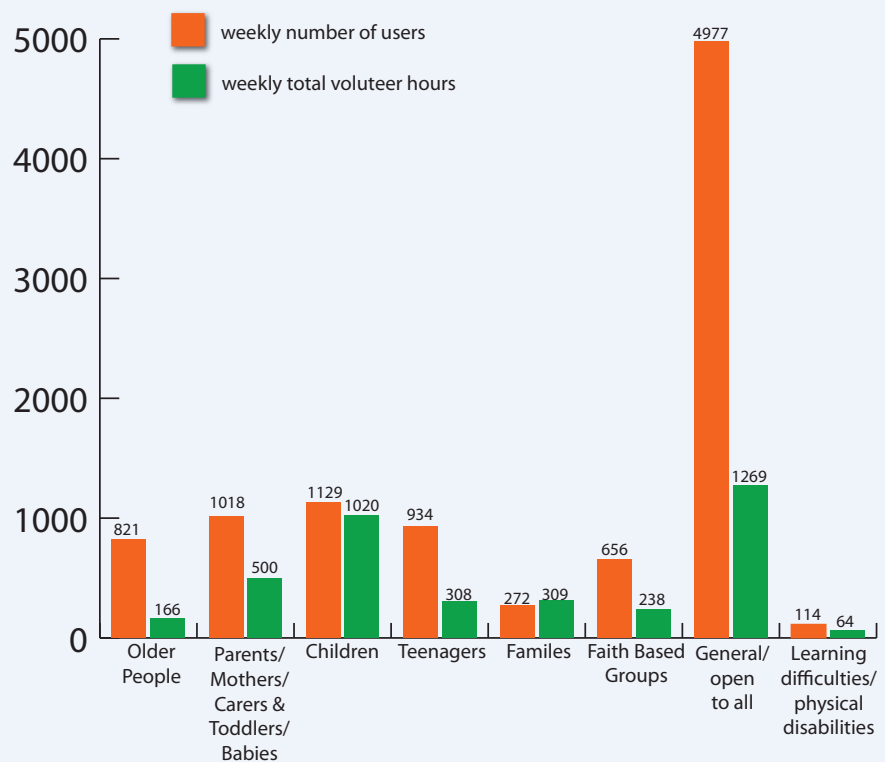


Total Weekly Attendance & Volunteer Hours



- All together faith and belief groups employ 31 full-time, 15 part-time and 9 sessional staff.
- An army of volunteers donate 2067 hours a week to community life in Bracknell Forest, equalling 83 full time jobs! If this contribution is valued at the national minimum wage (£5.80) it equates to a contribution of more than £623,000 to civil society. At a more realistic £10 per hour, the value increases to over £1 million.
- It should be recognised that these figures do not include volunteer time given over to principle acts of worship, or to other groups/organisations outside of the faith and belief arena.
- If these figures are taken as representative of all faith and belief organisations, we can estimate. A total of 9921 weekly service users and 3876 hours volunteered per week, equalling 108 full time jobs! Or in excess of £2 million contributed to civil society (see graph below).

Total Weekly Attendance and Volunteer Hours as a Representative Sample



CASE STUDY

Kerith in the Community is one of the practical expressions of Kerith Community Church's desire to serve the local community in a caring and professional way. We want to see people's lives changed through a number of initiatives such as Crisis Intervention and Foodbank. We are inclusive and will help anyone if we can possibly do so regardless of race, religion, age, gender, marital status or disability. Bracknell Area Foodbank feeds local people in crisis by exchanging Foodbank vouchers, available to participating organisations, for nutritionally balanced food. It is run entirely by volunteers.

Alice (not her real name) was referred to Kerith in the Community by another voluntary agency who work with homeless people.

Alice is a single mother with two children, one in her teens the other under 11 years.

Because of family breakdown Alice had a period when she was homeless and at one stage she was sleeping in her car with her children. The statutory services picked this up and, together with the referring organisation, she was rehoused. However, this brought about other difficulties since Alice had nothing to put into the home in the way of furniture, equipment or kitchen white goods, and no family living locally to help. Added to this there was benefit delay because of the changes in her circumstances.

Kerith in the Community has a fund for crisis intervention and was able to help Alice to acquire some of these basic and necessary items. Through the Foodbank she was also able to have a food parcel to help the family with basic nutritional food for a short period.

Alice's teenage daughter was very interested in coming to the Friday Youth Group, 'Life' to build up new friendships. She is keen to remain at home and continue her studies although there had been a possibility of her moving out into her own lodgings during the difficult period when they were all homeless.

Alice is keen to remain in touch with the workers who helped her through this period and gave her a listening ear over several cups of coffee.



CASE STUDY

Storehouse

Throughout the year good quality clothes, toys and house goods are collected so that twice a year we can run Storehouse. To do this, after the morning service on the Sunday prior to the Storehouse day we set out everything in either the main hall at South Hill Road or the hall at Crown Wood School and then at 10.00am on the day the doors are opened and anyone can come in and take whatever they want for free. As Storehouse has become known in the community more people come (even starting to queue from 7.30am) and more people donate goods throughout the year.

Most weeks we get requests for furniture from various agencies and we receive phone calls saying that someone has goods to donate – just what was needed!!! Through this we have been able to help a family involved in domestic violence that were in need of furniture and beds and some young people moving into bedsits have benefitted from having furniture which has been donated.

Lunch Clubs and Songs of Praise

At EBC we run lunch clubs and other events for older people. Very often older people are some of the loneliest people in our local community. They love coming to meet with other people and to be well fed! We also have Songs of Praise teas, Thursday fellowship and social events just for older people. One example is of a lady who was referred to us by her GP. We sent her the invitation to the Lunch Club and Songs of Praise and for a while she did not come but recently she came to a social meal which we ran on a Saturday. This was the first time she had been out of the house for three years. She has now been to the lunch club and was thrilled to meet up with people she has not seen for years and knew from when their children were younger and went to school together. They now contact each other by telephone to keep in touch which helps alleviate the loneliness they feel.



Easthampstead
Baptist Church
*To love God, to love
people and to grow
together to become
more like Jesus*

CASE STUDY

Churches Together in Crowthorne HOPEZoneYouth Drop In

Churches Together in Crowthorne currently hold a Wednesday night drop in service for secondary school children at Crowthorne Baptist Church in the High Street from 3.30 to 8 pm, called 'HOPEZone'.

This facility grew out of the Hope 08 initiative involving all churches in Crowthorne under the umbrella of Churches Together when it was decided to start up activities that could be sustained for the community. There has been a Friday night outreach session at the recreation ground in Crowthorne for some time which reaches out to young people who use this communal facility for meeting and hanging out. From this it was realised that young people in Crowthorne had nowhere specific to go and which would provide a safe, secure and friendly place for youngsters to meet and "chill".

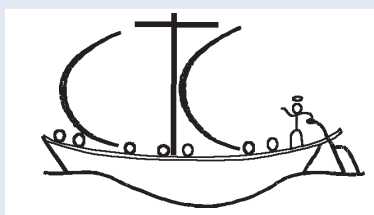
Since 2008 a premises has been sought, but with nothing available, 'HOPEZone' started up in the foyer of the Baptist Church from September 2009 as a temporary measure until such premises could be obtained, as the need is current. Help in the form of a grant from Bracknell Forest Council's Extended Services has provided 2 Wiis, 2 Xboxes and a TV and games. A tuck shop is also run and there is provision for a conversation area and a quiet area for study. Currently approximately 25 youngsters per night attend but the organisers check numbers regularly and try to keep to no more than 20 at a time. The drop in has a regular core attendance of 12. The youngsters come mainly from Edgbarrow School, but there are also some from outlying areas.

'Robin' came to the drop in through the Friday night outreach work at the recreation ground with severe family issues together with bullying at school and has now become a helper with new youngsters.

'Jenny' came along with a difficult family situation and social problems and now attends on a regular basis and interacts with her peers. As a result, a member of the HOPE Team is also now working with the family.

Although the drop in takes place at Crowthorne Baptist Church, helpers from every Crowthorne church are regularly involved in 'HOPEZone' promoting good interchurch and intergenerational relationships.

Churches Together are still looking for a permanent site to expand the project, which is clearly needed, where they can open 5 days a week.



Summary of Survey findings

Our survey clearly demonstrates that the strength of the faith sector lies in the thriving and diverse services and activities being delivered across Bracknell Forest, reaching several thousand people and making a significant contribution to the local community.

Serving the Community

Often characterised as 'goodwill', delivering services to the community is the major strength of the faith sector. However, over time, changes in legislation are placing more and more pressure on voluntary, community and faith organisations to 'professionalise' their services in-line with the statutory sector. This process of professionalisation highlights the need for training and development, but not necessarily any subsequent increase in funding support. Efforts to support the training and development needs of the faith sector should be explored.

Funding

Traditionally funding streams for faith groups have been difficult to source. Funding needs to be made more easily accessible for those organisations that deliver high quality services and have systems for financial accountability in place.

Partnerships and Infrastructure

The development of stronger relationships between the faith sector and voluntary and community sector infrastructure bodies such as Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, Bracknell Forest Minorities Alliance, Voluntary Sector Forum and the Federation of Community Groups. Support in the form of funding advice, governance, access to training, signposting and financial accountability can be offered. Significant links to other support networks are already in place and would help to reduce duplication and increase capacity.

Impact

The community service that the faith groups give to the people of Bracknell Forest has a huge impact on the individuals they serve and contributes across the Sustainable Community Strategy. In particular children and young people, families and older people work, has a significant impact on the health and well being of the local community as can be seen in the example case studies given in this report.

Chapter 6



Recommendations/Next Steps

- Acknowledge and celebrate the good works being carried out by faith organisations and highlighted in this report
- Explore the possibility of developing a Faith and Belief Forum
- Seek support from existing networks eg South East England Faith Forum
- Discuss the possibility of further co-operation between faiths
- Share common themes of service delivery and best practice
- Share information regarding possible sources of funding
- Swap/share information resources and publicity
- Explore ways of improving communication between groups
- Explore ways of improving understanding between groups
- Explore ways of developing capacity
- Explore ways of encouraging new membership and developing themes of Community Cohesion
- Explore ways of giving a stronger and unified voice for the faith sector at a strategic level
- Explore staff/volunteer training needs

Appendix A Survey Statistics

Q1 About your place of worship

Faith Tradition	
Buddhism	0
Christianity	19
Hinduism	2
Islam	2
Judaism	0
Sikhism	0
Baha'i	1
Christian denomination	
Anglican	4
Church of England	4
United Reformed Church	1
Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches	1
Links to all denominations/non denominational	2
Seventh Day Adventist	1
Roman Catholic	1
Methodist	1
Anglican and Methodist	1
Baptist	3
Meeting Place	
Church	14
School	3
Community building/Private residence/Others	7
Registered charity	
Yes	8
No	11
In progress	5
Total number of paid staff	
Full time	31
Part time	15
Others	9
Listed Status	
Yes	5
No	19
Number of people regularly attending worship	
Total weekly attendance	6125
Under 16's	1630
Adults	4495

Appendix A

Q2 Buildings

Questions asked	Yes	No	Other
Do you have a building of your own?	14	10	
Do you have rooms for hire?	10	14	
Do you have spare capacity?	4	20	
Do you have kitchen facilities?	12	12	
Do you have crèche facilities?	8	16	
Disability Discrimination Act compliant?/ Building fully accessible?	8	11	5 part
Hearing loop system?	11	13	
Facilities for visually impaired?	1	21	2 part
Dedicated parking?	13	11	

Q3 Does your faith community already work with any of the following agencies?

Agency	Number of faith groups
Housing Services	3
Community engagement forums	4
Youth services	3
Voluntary and community groups	15
Community alcohol/drug teams	3
Police	9
Social services	4
Health/PCT	5
Other	6 including schools, nurseries, private sector

Q4 Summary of recorded activities

Faith organisation	Activity	Who it is for	Frequency
St John the Baptist Crowthorne	Mums + Tots	Parents, carers toddlers & babies	Weekly
Kerith Community Church	Friday Night Youth	11-18 year olds	Weekly
	There's More to Life	Pensioners	Weekly
	Sparklers	Mums & toddlers	Weekly
	Hilltop	Adults with learning difficulties	Monthly
	Konnections	Families with disabled children	Weekly
	Christian against Poverty	People struggling with debt	Daily
	Deaf Hope	Hearing impaired	Weekly
	Foodbank	People in crisis	Bi weekly
Newbold College & Church	Lunch Club	Over 60's	Bi weekly
	Toddlers Group	Parents & toddlers	Weekly
	Gym Activites	13-19 year olds	Weekly
St Michael & all Angels Church Sunninghill	Parent & Toddler	Parents & toddlers	Weekly
	Ploughman's Lunch	Older people	Monthly
	Ladies Fellowship	Ladies	Weekly
St Michaels Church Sandhurst	Toddler Time	Parents & toddlers	Bi weekly
	Lunch Club	Pupils at Edgebarrow school	Weekly
	Drop-in for Teenagers	Local teenagers	Weekly
Bracknell Islamic Cultural Society	Qur'an Class	Children 5+	Weekly
	Friday Prayers	All Muslims	Weekly
Great Hollands Free Church	Coffee Shop	Open to all	Weekly
	Parenting Course	Parents of 0-6's	Weekly (7 wk)
	Parenting Course	Parents of 5-12's	Weekly (7 wk)
	Open Door Club	7-11 year olds	Annually
	Gt Hollands Shoe Bank Appeal	General appeal	Annually

Summary of recorded activities continued . . .

St Peter's Church Whitegrove	Church	People who do not normally attend	Weekly
	Home Group	Christian understanding	Weekly
	Teenage Groups	Teenagers	Fortnightly
	Weekend Away	All	Annually
Warfield Churches	Sunshine Toddler Group	Parents & toddlers	Weekly
	Tinies & Tots	Parents & toddlers	Weekly
	First Steps	Parents & toddlers	Weekly
	Jesus + Doughnuts Christian Union	Pupils at Garth Hill College	Weekly
	Jesus + Doughnuts	Brackenhale school pupils	Weekly
	Refresh (after school club)	Brackenhale school pupils	Weekly
	Stuffed (after school Club)	Garth Hill College	Weekly
Ahmadiya Muslim Association	Daily Prayers	All community members	Daily
	Monthly Meeting	All members	Monthly
	Qur'an Study Class	All members	Weekly
	Sports	Male members	Monthly
	Community Service	Local community	Monthly
St Margaret Clitherow & St Joseph's	Over 50's Club	Older people	Monthly
	Mother & Toddler	Mothers & children	Weekly
	Senior Citizens Christmas Party	Housebound & elderly	Annually
Easthampstead Baptist Church	Coffee Break	Mums/carers & under 5's	Weekly
	Remix	Children under 12	Weekly
	Remix Social	Children under 12	Bi-annually
	Club Plus	Young people 16-25	Monthly
	Club Unity	Young people 12-16	Monthly
	Youth Band	Young people 12-16	Weekly
	Refresh Coffee Shop	Open to all	3 x per week
	Crown Wood Social Club	members only	Weekly

Summary of recorded activities continued . . .

	Mid Day Munch	Older people >65	Monthly
	Lunch Club	Older people >65	Monthly
	Festive Meal	Older people >65	Annually
	Songs of Praise Tea	Older people >65	Monthly
	Lone, Single Parent Group	Parents & children	Monthly
	Stonehouse	All community members	Bi-annually
	Alpha	Anyone	11 weeks annually
	Fun Days	All members of the community	2 x per year
The Church @ The Pines	FAST Club	Children of primary age	Weekly term time
	Mix-It	Children yrs 7-10	Weekly term time
Crowthorne Baptist Church	HOPEZone Drop In	School years 6-13	Weekly
	Crowthorne Good Neighbours	Transport for elderly/ infirm	Daily
	The Ark Pre School	Pre school children	Daily term time
	Friday Film Club	School Years 7-9	Monthly
	Saturday Special	School Years 4-7	Bi monthly
	Thursday Fellowship	Senior citizens	Bi weekly
	Summer Scheme	Families	Weekly in Summer
	Hog Roast/Nativity Picture	Whole community	Yearly at Christmas
St Michael & St Mary Magdalene	Bumps & Babies	Pregnant mothers & babies	Weekly
	Toddlers	Parents carers and toddlers	Weekly
	Sticky Fingers	Primary age children	Weekly
	Tea & Chat	Older people esp bereaved	Weekly
Bracknell Methodist Church	Alcoholics Anonymous	Vulnerable adults	3 x per week
	Scouts	Young people	Weekly
	Guides	Young people	Weekly
	Parenting	Adults	Weekly
	Teabreak	Senior citizens	Weekly

Summary of recorded activities continued . . .

	Craft	Vulnerable adults/ senior citizens	Monthly
	Cheerleaders	Young people	Weekly
	Pilates	Adults	Weekly
	Bracknell Radio Club	Adults	Monthly
	U3A Music	Adults	Monthly
	U3A Science	Adults	Monthly
	U3A Art	Adults	Monthly
	Ballet	Children	Weekly
	Trefoil Guild	Senior citizens/ adults	Monthly
Hindu Community	Diwali (Festival of Lights)	All Hindus	Annually
	Navratri (The Devine 9 Nights)	All Hindus	Annually
	Katha/Puja (Devotion)	All Hindus	Annually
	Bhajan	All Hindus	Annually
St Pauls Church Harmans Water	Youth Club	Church youth & friends	Weekly
	Rock Skool	Young musicians	Weekly
	Boys Brigade	Youth	Weekly
	Girls Brigade	Youth	Weekly
	Small Time	Under 5's & mothers	Weekly
	Contact Centre	Separated families	Bi-Weekly
Bracknell & Sandhurst Nepalese Society	Dashain & Diwali Celebration	Hindus & guests	Annually
	Teej Celebration	Hindu women	Annually
	Nepalese New Year	All Nepalese community	Annually

Q5 Who else uses your building?

	Yes	Would like to in the future	No
Children/youth	11	1	12
Parenting services	5	4	15
Elderly peoples care	7	3	14
Education/training/employment	3	4	17
Voluntary/community	12	1	11
Mental health	1	2	21
Learning/Physical disability	2	3	19
Health & fitness	9	2	13
Domestic violence	2	4	18
Race/Asylum	1	4	19
Drug/alcohol	3	2	19
Statutory	4	0	20

Q6 Would you like to link with other faith groups or denominations who are working on similar activities and Initiatives?

Yes	9
No	3
Would consider in the future	3
Already engaged	9

Would you consider becoming part of a Faith & Belief Steering Group (to develop a Forum)

Yes	7
No	7
Would consider in the future	10

Appendix B Survey Statistics

Participants

1	Bracknell Hindu Community
2	Bracknell Methodist Church
3	St Michael & St Mary Magdalene Church
4	Crowthorne Baptist church
5	The Church @ The Pines
6	The Baha'i Community
7	Bracknell & Sandhurst Nepalese Community
8	St Pauls Church Harmans Water
9	Easthampstead Baptist Church
10	St Margaret Clitherow & St Joseph's Catholic Church
11	Ahmadiya Muslim Association
12	Warfield Churches
13	Bracknell Forest Christian Network
14	St Peter's Church Whitegrove
15	Community Baptist Church
16	Great Hollands Free Church
17	Bracknell Islamic Cultural Society (BICS)
18	All Saints Church Ascot Heath
19	St Michaels Church Sandhurst
20	St Michael & All Angels Church Sunninghill
21	Newbold College & Church
22	Kerith Community Church
23	St John the Baptist Crowthorne
24	Holy Trinity Bracknell

Should you require any further information please contact:

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THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF A SACRE

A SACRE must:

- advise the LA on RE given in accordance with the agreed syllabus, and on matters related to its functions, whether in response to a referral from the LA or as it sees fit ¹¹
- publish an annual report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups, specifying any matters on which it has advised the LA, broadly describe the nature of that advice, and set out reasons for offering advice on matters not referred to it by the LA ¹²
- send a copy of the report to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) ¹³
- meet in public unless confidential information is to be disclosed ¹⁴
- make minutes of its meetings available for inspection at the LA's offices (so far as the minutes relate to the parts of meetings that were open to the public). There are also provisions about public access to the agenda and reports for meetings. ¹⁵

A SACRE should:

- monitor the provision and quality of RE taught according to its agreed syllabus, together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus
- provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus; provide advice to the LA and its schools on methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training
- in partnership with its LA, consider whether any changes need to be made in the agreed syllabus or in the support offered to schools in the implementation of the agreed syllabus, to improve the quality teaching and learning of RE
- offer advice to the LA, and through the LA to schools, concerning how an existing agreed syllabus can be interpreted so as to fit in with a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum.

A SACRE may:

- require its LA to review the agreed syllabus and, if after discussion a vote is taken on this matter, the LA group on SACRE is not entitled to cast a vote. ¹⁶
A majority decision by the three other committees is sufficient
 - decide to advise the LA on matters related to its functions to the LA – equally, an LA may decide to refer matters to its SACRE ¹⁷
 - co-opt members who are not members of any of the four groups ¹⁸
– such co-opted members may provide educational expertise, young peoples' views or religious and non-religious views that reflect a diverse multi-cultural society. However, on any question to be decided by a SACRE, its constituent groups each have a single vote but co-opted members do not have a vote. ¹⁹
- Decisions within a group do not require unanimity. Each group must regulate its own proceedings, including provision for resolving deadlock. Many SACREs have chosen to adopt a constitution to regulate their proceedings and ways of working.

11 Section 391(1)(a), Education Act 1996

12 Section 391(6) and (7), Education Act 1996

13 Section 391(10), Education Act 1996

14 Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994, SI

15 Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994, SI 1994/1304

16 Section 391(3), Education Act 1996

17 Section 391(3), Education Act 1996

18 Section 390(3), Education Act 1996

19 Section 390(7) and Section 391(4), Education Act 1996

THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF AN ASC

Every LA is required to establish and support an occasional body called an agreed syllabus conference (ASC).

An ASC must:

- produce and recommend to the LA an agreed syllabus for RE which is educationally sound and meets legal requirements – as indicated earlier, this process should take account of the illustrative primary programme of learning and secondary programme of study but is in no way bound by them
- with any sub-committee it may appoint,²⁰ meet in public, subject to exceptions in relation to confidentiality²¹
- unanimously recommend a syllabus for adoption by the LA (each committee having a single vote) - there are provisions for the Secretary of State to become involved where an ASC is not unanimous²²
- include on any sub-committee at least one member of each of its constituent committees.

An ASC may specify what must be taught through the locally agreed syllabus.

In recommending a syllabus the ASC may not specify the amount of curriculum time that must be allocated to RE by schools, but they may provide an estimate of how much time their syllabus would require, to help schools to plan their timetable.

Membership of an ASC

- An ASC is required to be made up of four committees²³ (see 'LA role', p.10).
- Committee A – Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the opinion of the LA, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- Committee B - the Church of England
- Committee C - teacher associations
- Committee D - the LA.

There is no legal provision for an ASC to include co-opted members, but it can seek the advice it considers appropriate from those it considers appropriate, to inform the development of effective RE provision in its area.

The agreed syllabus

The locally agreed syllabus is a statutory syllabus of RE prepared under Schedule 31 to the Education Act 1996 and adopted by the LA under that schedule. It must be followed in maintained schools without a designated denomination.

Once adopted by the LA, the agreed syllabus sets out what pupils should be taught and can include the expected standards of pupils' performance at different stages.

Every locally agreed syllabus must reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.²⁴

The law does not define what the principal religions represented in Great Britain are. ASCs can decide which are the principal religions represented in Great Britain, other than Christianity, to be included in their agreed syllabus.

Agreed syllabuses in any community school and any foundation, voluntary aided or voluntary-controlled school without a religious character cannot require RE to be provided by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination.²⁵

This prohibition does not extend to the study of catechisms and formularies.

20 Schedule 31(6), Education Act 1996

21 Regulation 3, S1 1994/1304

23 Schedule 31(10), Education Act 1996

24 Section 390(2) Education Act 1996; Schedule 31, para 4, Education Act 1996

25 Section 375, Education Act 1996

26 Para 3 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

Councillor Alan Kendall,
Executive Member for Education,
Roseneath,
Lovel Road,
Winkfield,
SL4 2ES.

24 May 2010

Dear Councillor Alan Kendall,

As you may be aware the Bracknell Forest Council Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) does not currently admit a member to represent views of non-religious people.

I am a Religious Education teacher at Maiden Erlegh School in Wokingham, am a member of the British Humanist Association and am writing to you to ask that your authority consider making me a full member of Committee A of your SACRE.

As you may be aware almost half of the SACREs in England now include a humanist representative who has been chosen because they are a humanist. I believe that I would be able to make a strong contribution to the work of your committee and with my background in Religious Education and as a humanist be able to help ensure that the RE in your area remains broad and accurate.

I have been in contact with the British Humanist Association and they have agreed to support and endorse my application to join your committee and will be writing to you shortly to confirm this. I hope you will agree that I am a strong candidate for the job.

Yours sincerely,

C.c. Dr Janette Karklins - Director of Children, Young People and Learning



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Councillor Alan Kendall,
Executive Member for Education,
Roseneath,
Level Road,
Winkfield, SL4 2ES.

Monday, 24 May 2010

Dear Councillor Kendall,

I am writing to you to support and endorse the application that you have recently received from [redacted] to join your SACRE as a full voting member.

As you may be aware most SACREs in England now admit a humanist to their SACRE in their capacity as a humanist. I hope you will agree that as a Religious Education teacher Mr [redacted] is a very strong candidate and his inclusion would help ensure that your SACRE is more balanced and ensure that the RE in your area remains broad and accurate. We currently have no record of a humanist serving on your SACRE.

Secondly, I hope you will agree that given that non-religious views are now supposed to be taught in RE lessons, it follows that humanists should have a role in monitoring how their views are taught. This is a right that you currently only extended to religious representatives. Admitting a humanist will ensure that your SACRE is both inclusive and also acting fairly.

As you may be aware, in January the government published new guidance on Religious Education. The guidance solidified many positive improvements that have been made in recent years.

Significantly, it deleted the explicit prohibition on humanists serving as full members of SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs), which had appeared in the previous guidance (*Circular 1/94*). It also observed that SACREs could co-opt members to represent non-religious views (p.13) and noted how this could be done in the interests of inclusion (p.21).

With regards to RE syllabuses the guidance also reaffirmed the government's view that RE should examine both religious and non-religious perspectives. It noted that:

- 'Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right

and wrong, and what it means to be human. It can develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, of other principal religions, other religious traditions and worldviews that offer answers to questions such as these' (p.7).

The Government had already set out that RE should examine non-religious perspectives in:

- the new secondary curriculum published in 2007, which noted that RE should study a 'secular world view' (p.7 of the KS3 programme of study)
- the new RE programme of learning for the primary curriculum published in September 2009, which recommended that 'over the primary phase as a whole, children should draw on both religious and non-religious world views' (p.2)
- the 2004 national framework for RE, which recommended that there should be 'opportunities to study secular philosophies such as humanism' (p.14). The framework was endorsed by a wide range of RE professional and religious groups, including the Church of England, the Catholic Education Service and the Muslim Council of Britain.

We believe that the new guidance has now removed any sound reason that you may have had about not having a humanist as a full member of your SACRE. Humanists have had a long history of contributing towards and improving RE. The British Humanist Association has been a member of the Religious Education Council for well over thirty years, while some of our representatives have served on SACREs as full members throughout this period with distinction, including as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of both SACREs and ASCs. I hope you will now give consideration to admitting

Yours sincerely,



Paul Pettinger.

Education Officer – British Humanism Association
paul@humanism.org.uk

C.c. Dr Janette Karklins



**Bracknell
Forest
Council**

AHK/CAM

8 June 2010

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 24 May regarding membership of the Bracknell SACRE.

I am informed by the Chairman that the concept of an humanist having a representative slot in Group A of SACRE will be an agenda item for the next meeting on 8 July.

If the decision of SACRE were to create such a slot, then there will need to be a change in the SACRE constitution, which will require the approval of the Local Authority.

I will write to you again after 8 July.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Alan Kendall

cc Mr Paul Pettinger, Education Officer,
British Humanist Association

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Transforming religious education

Religious education in schools 2006–09

This report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of religious education (RE) in primary and secondary schools and discusses the key issues at the heart of RE teaching today. It is based principally on evidence from visits to 94 primary and 89 secondary schools in England between 2006 and 2009. The sample of schools represented a cross-section, including voluntary controlled schools, but did not include voluntary aided schools, for which there are separate inspection arrangements. The report builds on the findings of an earlier report, *Making sense of religion*.

Age group: 4–18

Published: June 2010

Reference no: 090215

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Executive summary

The past three years have seen significant changes and developments in the world of religious education (RE). The recent implementation by the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) of an action plan for RE has provided opportunities to strengthen support for the subject. The emphasis on promoting community cohesion has given added importance to RE within the curriculum. However, despite the very considerable commitment and energy which many teachers bring to the subject, in many of the schools visited the provision was no better than satisfactory quality, or in some cases inadequate, and the effectiveness of much of the RE observed was not good enough.

There is an urgent need to review the way in which the subject is supported at a number of levels. Among the questions to be considered are: whether the current statutory arrangements for the local determination of the RE curriculum are effective; whether there is sufficient clarity about what constitutes learning in RE and how pupil progress can be measured; and whether the provision for professional development in RE is adequate.

The quality of RE in the sample of primary schools was broadly the same as that reported in 2007 and not enough was of good quality. In schools where achievement was satisfactory, several key weaknesses were common which inhibited pupils' learning. Most notably, the pattern of curriculum delivery of the subject often limited the opportunities for sustained learning in RE. Schools visited took the subject seriously but, in too many cases, teachers lacked the knowledge and confidence to plan and teach high quality RE lessons.

The quality of RE in the secondary schools visited was worse than in the schools involved in the 2007 survey. The proportion of schools where RE was inadequate was considerably higher than previously. Among the factors which detracted from the quality of the provision were the impact on RE of the recent changes to the wider curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3, and weaknesses in the quality of learning in much of the provision for the short course GCSE in religious studies.

There are also positive developments. Examination entries in religious studies at GCSE and GCE A level have continued to rise each year since 2006, reinforcing a key success of the subject in recent years. Results in the full course GCSE are rising, although for the short course GCSE the results show only limited improvement, with around 50% to 55% of those entered gaining the higher A* to C grades. Results at GCE A and AS level have remained broadly the same since 2006.

As reported in 2007, a key success of RE in the past decade has been the improvement in pupils' attitudes towards the subject. In most of the schools visited, pupils clearly understood the importance of learning about the diversity of religion and belief in contemporary society. Where pupils expressed more negative attitudes towards diversity, the RE provision was often inadequate and included few opportunities for them to develop an understanding of the beliefs and ways of life of others.

Section B of the report explores some of the issues arising from the survey findings. Although progress has been made in recent years in establishing greater clarity about the nature of RE, there are still serious areas of uncertainty about the subject which often inhibit teachers' ability to plan, teach and assess RE effectively, and undermine pupils' progress. A number of developments, including new programmes of study for RE by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency which built on the publication in 2004 of the non-statutory national framework for RE, and the recent publication by the former DCSF of updated national guidance on RE, have gone some way to deal with some of these concerns.

However, the inspection evidence indicates that further work needs to be done to develop these initiatives further and to ensure that their impact in the classroom is more effective. In particular, more work needs to be done to clarify the place and use of concepts in RE and to define progression in pupils' learning more effectively. This report includes a consideration of the way in which a stronger role for enquiry in the teaching of RE could help address some of these issues.

A major success of RE is the way that it supports the promotion of community cohesion. In many schools RE plays a major role in helping pupils understand diversity and develop respect for the beliefs and cultures of others. Inspectors found a number of outstanding examples of good practice. There is scope to develop this contribution further by extending the use of local religious and belief communities in RE and ensuring that the changing nature of religion and belief in the contemporary world is reflected more strongly in the RE curriculum.

Previous Ofsted reports have raised the question of the effectiveness of the statutory arrangements in supporting the promotion of high quality RE. The current round of inspections has highlighted this issue again. There is still very significant variability in the quantity and quality of support for RE provided to schools by local authorities and Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education. Many schools have difficulty finding effective training in RE at local level in order to support implementation of the locally agreed syllabus. This report concludes that a review is needed to determine whether the statutory arrangements for the local determination of the RE curriculum which underpin the subject should be revised or whether ways can be found to improve their effectiveness.

Key findings

- Pupils' achievement in RE in the 94 primary schools visited was broadly similar to that reported in 2007. It was good or outstanding in four out of 10 schools and was inadequate in only one school.
- Students' achievement in RE in the secondary schools visited showed a very mixed picture. It was good or outstanding in 40 of the 89 schools visited but was inadequate in 14 schools.
- There has been a continuing rise in the numbers taking GCSE and A- and AS-level examinations in RE. Some concerns remain, however, about the quality of much of the learning that takes place in GCSE short courses.

- Most of the secondary schools in the survey with sixth forms did not fully meet the statutory requirement to provide core RE for all students beyond the age of 16.
- RE made a positive contribution to key aspects of pupils' personal development, most notably in relation to the understanding and appreciation of the diverse nature of our society. However, the subject's contribution to promoting pupils' spiritual development was often limited.
- The contribution of RE to the promotion of community cohesion was a strength of the subject in most of the schools visited. However, there is scope to extend the opportunities within the curriculum to enrich pupils' learning through greater use of fieldwork and contacts with religious and belief groups in the local community.
- There is uncertainty among many teachers of RE about what they are trying to achieve in the subject resulting in a lack of well-structured and sequenced teaching and learning, substantial weaknesses in the quality of assessment and a limited use of higher order thinking skills to promote greater challenge.
- Where RE was most effective, it used a range of enquiry skills such as investigation, interpretation, analysis, evaluation and reflection. However, this use is not yet defined clearly enough or integrated effectively within guidance to schools and, as a result, is not embedded sufficiently into classroom practice.
- There were a number of specific weaknesses in the teaching about Christianity. Many primary and secondary schools visited did not pay sufficient attention to the progressive and systematic investigation of the core beliefs of Christianity.
- There were significant inconsistencies in the way humanism and other non-religious beliefs were taught, and some uncertainties about the relationship between fostering respect for pupils' beliefs and encouraging open, critical, investigative learning in RE.
- The reliance on a narrow curriculum model in primary schools based on RE being delivered in half-termly units taught weekly, often inhibited sustained learning in the subject and limited the opportunities to link the subject to other areas of the curriculum.
- The revised Key Stage 3 secondary curriculum, introduced in September 2008, was having a negative impact on RE provision in about a third of the 30 secondary schools surveyed in 2008–09, particularly in Year 7. Too often the impact of these changes was not being monitored effectively.
- There was often a lack of continuity and progression between the RE curriculum in Key Stage 3 and the GCSE short courses. In the worst cases, this lack of continuity distorted pupils' understanding of religion and belief.
- The effectiveness of specialist staff training in RE was inadequate in four out of 10 of the schools visited. They were not giving sufficient time and resources to support teachers' professional development in the subject.
- The effectiveness of local arrangements to support RE varied too much and many local authorities did not ensure that their Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education had sufficient capacity to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

Recommendations

The Department for Education should, along with the relevant delivery partners:

- carry out a review of the current statutory arrangements for the local determination of the RE curriculum, to ensure that these provide the best means of promoting the high quality and consistency of RE in schools
- establish stronger mechanisms for supporting and holding to account the work of local authorities, Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education, and Agreed Syllabus Conferences in relation to RE.
- establish clearer national guidance for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Agreed Syllabus Conferences about the nature and use of key concepts in RE, the definition of progression, and the use of enquiry skills in RE in the design of agreed syllabuses
- provide more guidance on teaching about Christianity and non-religious world views, and effective ways of balancing the need to foster respect for pupils' religions and beliefs with the promotion of open, critical, investigative learning in RE.

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OfQual) should:

- review, and as necessary adjust, the short course GCSE specifications in religious studies to ensure that they are securing a stronger focus on extending students' ability to understand the place of religion and belief in contemporary society.

Local authorities, in partnership with their Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Agreed Syllabus Conferences, should:

- ensure that the work of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Agreed Syllabus Conferences has good access to subject expertise to enable them to support schools effectively in promoting high quality RE
- ensure that high quality professional development in RE is available to their schools and encourage them to make the most of these opportunities to improve the quality of RE teaching
- ensure that agreed syllabuses and related advice:
 - offer guidance about the systematic use of enquiry skills in RE to enable schools to plan the subject in a more coherent and rigorous way
 - provide greater clarity about the use of key concepts and the definition of progression in RE
 - include guidance to schools about ways of incorporating RE within more innovative and creative approaches to curriculum planning.

Schools should:

- ensure that RE promotes pupils' spiritual development more effectively by allowing for more genuine investigation into, and reflection on, the implications of religion and belief for their personal lives
- make proper provision for continuing professional development for subject leaders, specialist teachers and others with responsibility for teaching RE in order to improve its quality
- provide more opportunities to use fieldwork and visitors in RE.

Primary schools should:

- ensure that the delivery of RE incorporates more sustained learning and stronger links with the wider curriculum.

Secondary schools should:

- explore the most effective ways of teaching RE in the context of revisions to the wider curriculum and monitor carefully the impact of any changes on pupils' achievement
- ensure that there is effective continuity and progression in pupils' learning especially between Key Stage 3 and GCSE provision.

Report on the NASACRE AGM held in London on 12 May

The meeting began with an address from Clare Short in which she spoke very positively about the role and importance of RE. Although the minutes of the meeting have not yet been approved, they are also my notes of the meeting as I took them so this is my record of Clare's address:

The title of her **keynote address** was : '**Religion, Politics and Community: SACREs' capacity to engage...**'

CS began by suggesting that we were meeting in interesting times and reflected that in China this is said to be a curse, adding that the truth of this will be up to us to determine. She said she had long been in favour of a hung parliament because under successive governments we have seen a greater concentration of power at the centre, together with associated arrogance, with parliament often little more than 'rubber stamping'. The pressure and power of 24 hour media coverage sucks politicians into its agenda. She observed that power had been increasingly concentrated in No 10, something she thinks should change. In her view it is the practice of our local committees made up of people who treat one another with respect and listen to each other that leads to better decisions because there is space for challenge, reflection and discussion.

There are going to be massive cuts and a difficult time ahead. There are big questions about who will bear the burden of these cuts. CS hopes for less bureaucracy over public services because current levels limit creativity and spontaneity amongst practitioners. She went on to acknowledge that the religious situation in this country is very different from what she experienced as a child at school, where in a Roman Catholic school there had been hockey matches played between English and Irish Roman Catholics. She reflected how there had been a time after WWII when people from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent were encouraged to come to Britain to take up jobs that needed to be filled. Deep racism was common, illustrated, for example, by the fight Sikhs had over their right to wear turbans. She reminded her listeners of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech and a 15% vote for the National Front. There was much turbulence in industrial relations and many violent clashes. She said in mentioning these things she was reminding us of the nastiness and the tensions that were common between people of different ethnicities and religions. The work of teachers of RE has massively shifted the position in Britain. Lots of people have now passed through a system in which they have learned about a diversity of religions and cultures. She highlighted that the white community in Birmingham will be a minority community in 10 years time and the city will be 'majority nothing'. She reflected that in the past people either were or, due to the pressures of the times, pretended to be part of the main stream culture which was understood to be the Church of England, whereas people can now be proud of their own heritages and affiliations. We are bigger people when we learn from others and their diverse traditions. The work of RE teachers and of SACREs has been key to taking Britain on this enormously valuable journey. Things are not perfect in Britain but we have done better than many other countries where there are silos of difference. We should take pride in this because we (ie those present) have been at the core of this journey.

Despite this improved situation, it is not good enough just to say we must all respect one another. CS reminded delegates of the much more enormous aspiration which is set out in the NASACRE booklet 'So you're joining...', quoting from the importance of RE statement reproduced page 18. Reminding delegates that teachers could not be political, she

highlighted the political nature of this statement. We have to engage young people with these questions but with great care.

CS went on to reflect further on the nature of the times in which we are living: we are richer than we have ever been. People of the past would be astonished by how unsatisfied people are with all the material wealth they have. Richard Leyard's work on happiness has suggested that increased economic growth up to £10,000 per head does increase people's happiness but beyond that it doesn't work because levels of competitiveness and dissatisfaction increase. She recommended a book entitled *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett which studies happiness/unhappiness, crime, mental health etc across OECD countries, also comparing different states of the USA. It concludes that the more unequal the society, the more they are likely to have crime, high prison populations, teenage pregnancies, abuse of alcohol and drugs. In its analysis of different societies, Britain comes high up the list. Our kind of society is rich beyond belief but not happy in significant/deep ways. Instead we live in a hedonistic culture where people have little or no time for the people they love; a consuming, trample-on-others culture. However, maybe we are on the verge of change. She suggested that the situation she described clashes with the expressed aspirations of RE. She asked how we make ourselves more content and happy. Can there be real happiness without care for others? She suggested that the more altruistic people tend to be, the happier they are. Children need access to discussion about and reflection on these ideas but it's difficult because it's political and we cannot be political.

Increasingly effective communication and easy travel have profoundly changed the world in ways which most people would consider to be positive. However, there are massive threats. Global warming is a reality so we must respond to the need to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions. Water shortages mean many people don't have access to it not only for drinking but also to sustain agriculture. This is causing serious divisions.

CS expressed concern about the response of Europe to the numbers of asylum seekers and displaced people, a widespread hostility to these groups, and the growth of the right. She expressed the view that Britain spends a lot of money on treating asylum seekers badly and also that something ugly has burst out in Europe with a shift to the right in traditionally liberal countries. However, she also recognised the need to listen to people's concerns about asylum seekers. The Geneva Convention was drawn up based on an understanding of how we should have responded to fleeing Jews but now systems allow profiteers to benefit from trafficking in people, including criminals, seeking to flee from countries for better opportunities whilst genuinely poor people languish in camps etc. Regulations need to be rethought and rewritten.

CS stressed that global warming and resulting agricultural difficulties will lead to far more displaced people and people wanting to move to countries which have better conditions. Nasty situations are likely to arise. This is a huge issue comparable with some of the greatest times of change and upheaval in history. The way we live in the OECD countries is not sustainable and people in developing countries want the same as we have. We have the technology and information to ensure everyone has the basics. (90% of new births will be in the poorest countries). Religious leaders and moral philosophers have dreamt of a situation which would challenge us to create a fairer society. Even the most selfish people wanting to pass on their wealth to their children have to consider bigger issues. Even volcanic ash began to lead to food shortages in Britain. Systems could easily grind to a halt.

CS spoke about the growth of Islamophobia, recognising it to be the opposite of RE aspirations. Teachers are not supposed to have a political agenda but our work is affected by all these international situations. She suggested the world is not responding in an intelligent way to the Middle East situation. There is a great need for global cooperation and this will be more difficult if we do not stick to agreements achieved after WWII which are being breached in the Middle East. It is not good enough to respond superficially, there is a need to take seriously those aspirations she quoted from the NASACRE book. BNP tirades are now directed more specifically against Muslims and these feelings are expressed even by Sikh members of the BNP.

Issues of religion are being used as identities of conflict eg Jewish fanatics in Gaza, Christian fundamentalists supporting expansionist Israel because the Messiah will not return and the world will not end until this is achieved. They support this even though they don't believe Jews will be in heaven alongside themselves. Identities are now significantly linked with religion. This is an issue which it is difficult for us to deal with. We must share, and not just gloss over, how religious traditions contain ugliness and can be used for bad and for division. This is an enormous challenge for us and we need to think about the impact on curriculum and resources.

There will be great cuts soon and there will be contests about where these fall. In our work we try to hold the moral space and mutual respect – we have to avoid politics but all these political issues are on our agenda. CS said she was convinced that people long for something more than our hedonistic approach to life. As we go forward from where we are, either generosity and altruism will rise or nastiness and danger will prevail. She concluded by saying it is we who have the job of taking the next generation through these difficulties!

Business part of the meeting:

Key areas addressed:

- Treasurer – there will be a rise in the membership fee from £85 (unchanged for three years) to £95.
- Secretary – reported on the success of the recruitment training and talked the meeting through the new training CD ROM which we should look at in our next (autumn) meeting.
- A change in the constitution now allows for up to six co-options to the executive for the purpose of spreading the increasing workload.
- RE Celebration – the meeting was reminded that there is to be a national celebration of RE during March 2011. A website providing information is available: <http://www.celebratingre.org/> We should think about how our SACRE might like to respond to this. I will put something in newsletters between now and then.
- New members elected at the meeting to the executive: Graham Langtree (RE Adviser Devon), Khadijah Knight (Muslim RE teacher – her second term), Sharon Artley (RE Consultant and very much involved with the RE Trails initiative)

There was a time of questions and answers with members of QCDA, Ofsted and the RE Council. I can give more detail about this session if required.

Minutes of the meeting will be published on the NASACRE website.

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