

Local inter faith organisations

A guide



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Cover photographs

Front cover clockwise from top left:

1. Wellingborough Interfaith Group School Workshops team visit to All Saints CEVA School and Nursery.
2. Redbridge Faiths Forum Women's Inter Faith Group International Women's Day event.
3. Members of Fermanagh and Omagh Interfaith Group and local volunteers and Fermanagh and Omagh Council Officers planting tree in Inter Faith Week. Photo: Fermanagh and Omagh Council.
4. Building Bridges Burnley and Burnley FC in the Community inter faith football tournament.
5. Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M) visit to Jain Samaj Manchester.
6. Aberdeen Inter Faith Group at Varapunya Meditation Centre for Mental Health Week Interfaith Mindfulness Day.

Back cover clockwise from top left:

1. Newcastle Council of Faiths 'Faith Coach-Friendship through Faith' tour, visiting Newcastle Cathedral.
2. North Kent Interfaith's Annual Inter Faith Walk, tree planting for peace at Gravesend Gurdwara.
3. Sunderland Interfaith Forum Walk of Friendship, Inter Faith Week.
4. Worcestershire Inter Faith Forum and Worcester Cathedral event with speaker Dr Dean Irwin. Photo WIFF.
5. West Thames College, Hounslow Friends of Faith and Al-Mustafa Trust iftar at West Thames College. Photo: West Thames College.
6. Re-signing of Birmingham Faith Covenant. Photo: Birmingham City Council.

Local inter faith organisations

A guide



The Inter Faith Network for the UK

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The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) was founded in 1987 to “advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in Britain, including an awareness both of their distinctive features and their common ground and to promote good relations between persons of different faiths”.

IFN links in membership: national faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, and academic and educational bodies with a focus on inter faith or multi-faith issues. It works with them to deepen inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK. It carries out its work through raising awareness within wider society of the importance of inter faith issues, creating opportunities for linking and sharing good practice, and providing advice and information to help the development of new inter faith initiatives and the strengthening of existing ones.

Foreword

Grassroots inter faith engagement is vital to the continued development of a harmonious, inclusive and diverse society. Support for the development of local inter faith organisations has therefore been a very important part of the work of the Inter Faith Network for the UK since it was founded in 1987. In turn, local inter faith bodies – a number of which were among the founding bodies of IFN – have made, through IFN and alongside it, an enormously significant contribution to its work for inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK.

This guide builds on earlier IFN publications which share ideas for, and guidance on, setting up and running local inter faith organisations. It has been created at a time when local inter faith activity is continually evolving and diversifying and it begins by sketching out some of the contours of the evolving landscape. It then goes on to focus specifically on multi-faith local inter faith organisations. It looks at some of the practicalities of setting them up, running and sustaining them; and the range of their many activities which contribute so much to their local areas.

We hope that the guide will be a useful resource for all taking forward the crucial work of developing and strengthening good inter faith relations and cooperation at local level.

On behalf of the Board of IFN, we thank the many local inter faith bodies which have contributed examples. We thank also the IFN staff and others who drew the guide together and IFN's Trustees from the local inter faith category of its membership for their input. Some sections benefitted from drawing, by agreement, on material jointly created with Near Neighbours.

The guide could not have been created without support towards IFN's general work during the period of its creation from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; trusts; and donors. We are also grateful to Westhill Endowment for a grant towards early stages of the project.

Canon Hilary Barber and Mr Narendra Waghela
Co-Chairs, The Inter Faith Network for the UK

Contents

Using this guide	1
Who is this guide for?.....	1
Nature and scope of the guide.....	1
Examples and illustrations	1
A word about words	1
Closure of the Inter Faith Network for the UK and future local inter faith support.....	2
A Facebook Group for local inter faith bodies	2
Inter Faith Week.....	2
Sources of information and support.....	2
And finally	2
Chapter 1: The changing face of local inter faith engagement	4
1) Increase in local inter faith engagement – some factors	4
2) Faith communities and local inter faith engagement	4
3) A growing range of different types of local inter faith initiative	7
4) Opportunities for local dialogue and cooperation as part of regional and national programmes.....	9
Chapter 2: A local inter faith organisation for your area?	11
1) The important role of local inter faith organisations	11
2) Ways they make a difference	11
Chapter 3: Preparing the ground and first steps	14
1) Some important questions.....	14
2) Establishing the need for a new body	14
3) Inter faith approach	15
4) Aims, Vision, Mission and Values	15
5) Different models – What kind of inter faith initiative might be best for our area?	17
6) Consulting on plans.....	19
7) What area should our inter faith initiative cover?	20
8) Making the initiative a priority	20
9) Start to plan the work!	20
10) Resources for the new initiative	21
11) Financial responsibilities	22
12) Insurance	22
Chapter 4: Thinking about structure and process	24
1) Governance	24
2) Types of voluntary organisation structure	24
3) Developing a constitution.....	25
4) Committee make up and development	26
Chapter 5: Names and logos	28
1) What shall we call ourselves?.....	28
2) Logos	28
Chapter 6: Times and places	32
1) Timing	32
2) Venues for meetings and events	33

Chapter 7: Some aspects of engagement – dialogue, inclusion and partnership	36
1) Discussion and dialogue	36
2) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	37
3) Partnership working.....	42
Chapter 8: Developing a successful programme	46
1) Learning and awareness raising	46
2) Social action and social issues	55
3) Youth inter faith activities	61
4) Women’s inter faith activity.....	64
5) Standing together in solidarity.....	66
6) Prayer and services	68
7) Social gatherings.....	71
Chapter 9: Communications	74
1) A communications strategy.....	74
2) ‘Speaking on behalf of’ and statements	75
3) Data protection.....	75
4) Communication channel options	75
5) Websites.....	76
6) Social Media	77
7) Creating content for social media	79
8) Dealing with ‘trolls’	79
9) A social media glossary.....	79
10) Online Meeting Platforms.....	81
11) Press and broadcast media	82
12) Further Resources.....	82
Chapter 10: Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing	84
1) Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.....	84
2) Reviewing work	84
3) A strategy for the way ahead	85
Chapter 11: Sustainability	87
1) Sustainability tips	87
2) Maintaining a strong pattern of involvement.....	87
3) Mutual support.....	88
4) Staying in connection during challenging periods.....	88
5) Seizing opportunities.....	88
6) Affirming and honouring people’s contributions	89
7) Succession planning	89
8) Training and support	90
9) Financial sustainability.....	90
Chapter 12: An action points checklist	92
1) Getting under way	92
2) Taking the work forward – whether your organisation is newly launched or longstanding	92
3) Review, evaluate and renew	93
Member Organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK	95

Focus features

Focus on Aberdeen Interfaith Group.....	10
Focus on Altrincham Interfaith Group	13
Focus on Barnet Multi Faith Forum	23
Focus on Birmingham Council of Faiths	27
Focus on Cornwall Faith Forum	31
Focus on Fermanagh and Omagh Interfaith Group	35
Focus on Leicester Council of Faiths	45
Focus on Luton Council of Faiths.....	73
Focus on Newcastle Council of Faiths.....	83
Focus on Swansea Interfaith Forum.....	86
Focus on Woking People of Faith	91
Focus on York Interfaith Group.....	94

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Using this guide

Who is this guide for?

Local inter faith organisations are bodies which bring together people from faith (and sometimes belief) groups in their areas to work for understanding and cooperation.

It is hoped that this guide will be useful both for those developing the work of existing local inter faith organisations and also for people thinking about setting up new ones.

The guide may also be of interest to bodies considering work in partnership with local inter faith organisations and to those considering funding them, as well as to the growing number of policy makers and academics interested in the important contribution that local inter faith organisations make to their local communities.

Nature and scope of the guide

No two local inter faith organisations are alike. All are as unique as the people who are part of them and their local communities. Even so, as reflected in this guide, there are commonalities of experience and process.

The guide provides a compendium of ideas and suggestions which have emerged from many years of engagement by the Inter Faith Network for the UK with local inter faith organisations. These include many topics about which IFN has regularly received questions and also good practice suggestions from local groups.

The guide focuses mainly on issues that are specific to local inter faith organisations. Except in some limited cases (in particular, relating to social media), it does not replicate general good practice guidance for voluntary organisations. There are already many excellent general resources available and a number of them are referenced at various points in the guide, including from bodies such as the Charity Commission and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).¹

¹ Comparable material is provided by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, and by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Organisations.

The guide content is not exhaustive. There are many different facets to local inter faith organisations' work, and there is a growing range of good practice across the different nations of the UK. Social media posts of different local inter faith bodies are a window into their work and activities and readers are encouraged to explore those. Readers may also find it helpful to look at the various reports on meetings for and about local inter faith engagement published by IFN (www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/publications/local) as well as local resources on the website of Interfaith Scotland.

In Scotland, local inter faith bodies and those interested in starting such bodies will find it helpful to be in touch with Interfaith Scotland, in Wales with the Inter Faith Council for Wales/Cyngor Rhyngffydd Cymru and, in Northern Ireland, with the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum.²

Examples and illustrations

The guide's topics are supported by numerous examples, including twelve 'Focus on' pages featuring local inter faith organisations from the former English Regions: East, East Midlands, London, North East, North West South East, South West, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber and from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. These were developed with the organisations and – as in the case of most descriptions in the guide – checked with them in draft.

The guide is extensively illustrated, both with photographs kindly provided to IFN and from social media posts. Copyright of those images remains with those who provided them to IFN or posted them (the urls to the side of reproduced social media posts link to the original posts).

A word about words

'Inter faith' is used in this guide to describe interactions between people of different faiths, and in some cases between them and people of non-religious beliefs.

² www.interfaithscotland.org; www.interfaithni.org/; and <https://interfaithwales.co.uk>

Closure of the Inter Faith Network for the UK and future local inter faith support

This guide is the final publication of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. The impending closure of IFN was announced with great regret by its Board of Trustees on 22 February 2024 for the reasons explained on IFN's website: www.interfaith.org.uk/news/news-release-inter-faith-network-for-the-uk-board-announces-closure-of-charity-due-to-withdrawal-of-government-funding. The last work on the guide was done during the period of preparation for closure. Some reference to IFN resources and support have, accordingly, been removed. However, the general references to the organisation remain, for practical reasons of ensuring completion of the publication, as to an operational organisation.

A Facebook Group for local inter faith bodies

During IFN's period of preparation for closure, it worked with member local inter faith bodies to explore ways that IFN's strand of work supporting local inter faith organisations might be taken forward in different ways. One of their main suggestions was the creation of a Facebook Group for local inter faith bodies. This was set up by IFN to be run independently by local groups and launched in May 2024. It can be found at www.facebook.com/groups/localinterfaithlinkuk. It is envisaged as a place for those involved with local inter faith organisations across the UK to network and share information, advice and good practice. Interfaith Scotland also runs a network for Scottish local inter faith groups; it encourages involvement also in the new UK Facebook Group.

Inter Faith Week

Inter Faith Week is programme led by IFN since 2009 which local inter faith bodies have regularly highlighted as particularly useful to them. A number of IFN's member bodies will be working together to take Inter Faith Week forward. More information on this is available at www.interfaithweek.org. That website is now run by United Religions Initiative UK on behalf of the new organising group, and the Faith & Belief Forum is acting as a contact point for those wishing to be kept in touch with information about the Week. Scottish Interfaith Week, running since 2004, is separately led by Interfaith Scotland.

Sources of information and support

It is planned that IFN's website will remain live for the near future. It includes many useful resources for those developing local inter faith activities or setting up new groups.

A number of IFN's member bodies have an interest in local inter faith organisations' work. These can be found listed at the back of this guide and at www.interfaith.org.uk/members/list and are referenced at a number of points within it. They include both regional bodies such as Faiths Forum for London, the North East Regional Faiths Network and South East of England Faiths Forum and also national inter faith organisations.

Another helpful source of support in some areas of England is the Near Neighbours programme of the Church Urban Fund which "brings people together in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in" www.near-neighbours.org.uk Also useful, particularly in the context of 'faith covenants' and faith and health, is Faith Action www.faithaction.net

In the Greater London area, the London Boroughs Faith Network may be relevant.

Faith communities, local authorities, councils for voluntary service and a range of other types of organisation are also valuable sources of support.

And finally

At the end of the guide you will find, in case helpful, a short checklist of points from the guide.

If you find the guide helpful in starting or developing a local inter faith organisation, you may wish to share it with others who may be interested. You can do by posting a link to its place on IFN's publications page [Publications - Resources - The Inter Faith Network \(IFN\)](#)

Local inter faith learning and good practice evolves continually so please do share your own through the new Facebook Group for local inter faith organisations: www.facebook.com/groups/localinterfaithlinkuk

Chapter 1: The changing face of local inter faith engagement

“The increasing religious diversity of the UK and our interconnected lives here and globally mean that inter faith understanding and cooperation are becoming ever more important. They are a vital part of living together well and developing as a harmonious and integrated society.”

Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK

1) Increase in local inter faith engagement – some factors

The last decade has seen a burgeoning of local inter faith activity. A number of factors have contributed to this, such as:

- The increasing diversity of the UK in many areas and the associated need for people of different faiths and beliefs to build positive inter faith relationships and find ways to live well together
- The work of faith and inter faith organisations, educational and academic bodies and many others which encourage initiatives to develop inter faith understanding and cooperation
- A recognition of the important contribution that faith communities make to society and of the added impact and the importance of their working together – and a desire on the part of many to contribute together to the wellbeing of society
- The integration and community cohesion agendas and the concern of Government national and locally, and of other bodies, to encourage those.
- Increased working towards legislation, policies and practices which respond to different religious and cultural requirements and needs in areas such as diet and funeral rites
- Equality legislation such as the 2010 Equality Act and associated guidance by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Advisory,

Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and others

- Continued interest on the part of faith communities, belief groups and individuals in dialogue and cooperation
- Greater interest in religion and belief on the part of many different sectors of society, from sports organisations to the media
- Active engagement side-by-side of faith-based organisations working on issues such as reception of those seeking sanctuary
- Increased teaching and learning about inter faith issues in HE, FE and schools
- Increased coverage by the media of faith and inter faith issues
- Impacts of the rise of extremism and terror attacks
- Impacts of overseas events which may affect particular community relationships in the UK
- Growing awareness of the impact of the legacies of colonialism on inter faith dynamics
- The COVID-19 pandemic having prompted the adoption of virtual meeting platforms and increased awareness of inter faith issues

In this section, we look briefly at some aspects of the landscape: how faith communities are engaging with inter faith activity locally and the growing variety of grassroots inter faith activity.

This context may be helpful to keep in mind when developing a local inter faith organisation.

2) Faith communities and local inter faith engagement

At one time, inter faith engagement was sometimes seen by faith communities as an ‘added extra’ – as something that was marginal to the concerns of local places of worship and their members. However, it is increasingly seen by faith groups as normal – and necessary – as reflected in the fact that:

- Many national faith community bodies provide guidance or support for inter faith engagement by their local members; they also model inter faith engagement through their own meetings and cooperative endeavours.
- Local faith groups and places of worship sometimes hold events to which they invite guests of other faiths.
- Some churches and mosques have established, twinning arrangements which can lead to closer working relationships, with support from national faith bodies and/or the Christian-Muslim Forum. Many other places of worship of different faiths have developed more informal links with other local places of worship. You can read more about friendship links and twinning on [IFN's website](#), where there are also details of further resources.



London Buddhist Vihara's Abbot meets with a priest from nearby St Michael and all Angels Bedford Park

www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=485113890432040&set=a.310384661238298&locale=en_GB

- Local faith organisations and their leaders often participate in the local inter faith organisation for their area.
- In some areas faith leaders are part of 'faith leaders' groups', for example the longstanding Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group and more recent initiatives such as the Oxfordshire Civic, Community and Faith Leaders Group.
- At times of difficulty, faith communities reach out to each other to stand together – for example with vigils of solidarity after terrorist attacks.
- Faith groups participate together in the consultations and programmes of local authorities and other statutory authorities – in some cases, such as Blackpool, Essex and Preston, entering into 'Faith Covenants' or other long-term arrangements with their local authorities. Further information about Faith Covenants can be found on Pages 43-44.



Faith Communities Forum of the Inter Faith Network for the UK meeting at Central Synagogue, London



Opening of Hindu Mandir in Gravesend, with Priti Patel MP and guests of other faiths. Photo: Gravesend Reporter



We were delighted to host faith leaders from 16 different places of worship, from all across the district today, as part of a special 'twinning' project to bring together people of different faiths and backgrounds #TeamBradford



4:09 PM · Apr 30, 2019

x.com/bradfordmcd/status/1123243059414802434



Birmingham Faith Leaders at Covid Remembrance and Thanksgiving event jointly organised with Birmingham City Council



Liverpool Faith Leaders on tour of HMS Prince of Wales

- Inter Faith Week each November sees many faith groups taking part in inter faith activities, as do Scottish Interfaith Week, Mitzvah Day, Sadaqa Day, Sewa Day and a number of other awareness raising and commemorative days, weeks and months.
- People of different faiths participate in local dialogue and friendship initiatives, such as local inter faith bodies and branches of the Council of Christians and Jews.
- Some dialogues take place with non-religious belief bodies, either through local forums that include these or through occasional events and conversations.
- Faith groups open their doors for people of different backgrounds to visit their places of worship, entering into discussion with visitors.



Vigil in Slough to show solidarity following Manchester Arena bombing. Photo: Emma Sheppard, Slough Observer

3) A growing range of different types of local inter faith initiative

There are many kinds of initiative working to promote inter faith understanding and cooperation at the local level. A number have already been noted in the section above. Some other examples are below.

a) Structured ongoing meetings for dialogue and cooperation involving particular faiths

As well as the multi faith local inter faith bodies that are the main focus of this guide, there are a number of local groups which focus on particular dialogues between two, or sometimes three, faiths.

For example, there are many branches of the Council of Christians and Jews, the aim of which is: 'for Jews and Christians to meet, to understand each other better and to create meaningful engagement between the communities'. There are also a few groups linked to the Christian Muslim Forum, the aim of which is 'to facilitate bridge-building activities between Christian and Muslim groups as platforms of engagement for the two communities to learn from one another, to share everyday concerns and to tackle difficult and controversial issues.'

There are also some national inter faith initiatives which have multi faith groups. For example, the Women's Interfaith Network (WIN) has a number of local branches which aim to develop and build friendships between women of different faiths, of no faith and of differing cultural backgrounds.

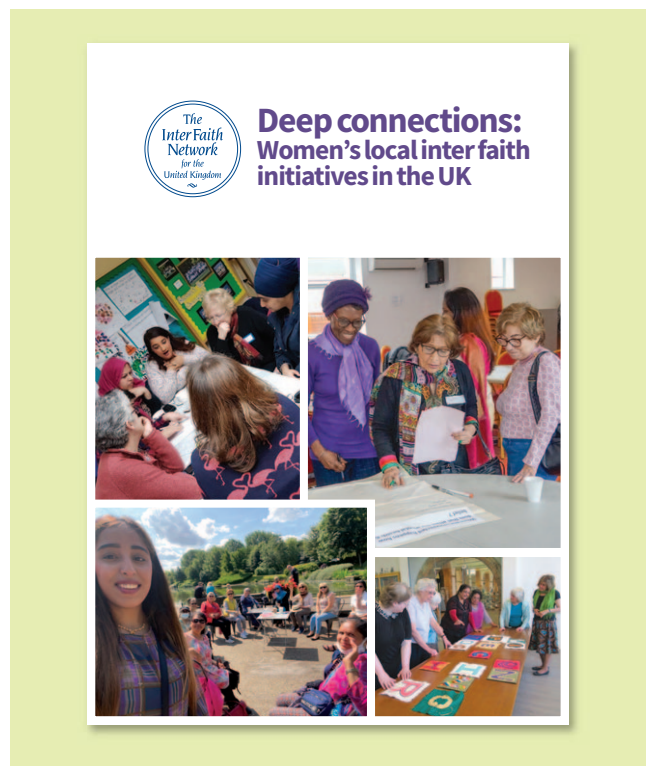
A national Jewish-Muslim women's organisation, Nisa-Nashim, supports the grassroots development of Jewish and Muslim women's groups. These local groups aim to provide safe, inclusive spaces of interaction. It also has some special interest groups.



b) Local inter faith initiatives with particular constituencies

i) Women's initiatives

There are a significant number of local inter faith initiatives led by, and usually focused particularly on, women of different faiths. Many, such as Sheffield Women's Interfaith Forum and Coffee 'n' Laughs in Newport, are featured in IFN's 2023 publication 'Deep Connections: Women's local inter faith initiatives in the UK'.



Women's Interfaith Forum Sheffield

The Women's Interfaith Forum Sheffield was established in 2018 to create a space for women of all faiths and none to be able to come together and have conversation. It began meeting in the wake of the Manchester Arena bombing, with the hope that by breaking down barriers and dispelling myths about each other's beliefs and traditions the women could help build better relationships and understanding and a stronger and safer community. The group come together to learn about each other's faith traditions; share food, stories and songs; as well as to consider issues relating to the place of women in religion and what different faiths teach about social responsibility.



Sheffield Women's Interfaith Forum – 'Faith Conversations' meeting

tinyurl.com/639237brf

Coffee 'n' Laughs, Newport

Coffee 'n' Laughs has its origins in an initiative started in 2007 for local women to help migrants and refugees with English Language. This was at the initiative of Community House Presbyterian Church of Wales, which employed an inter faith development worker in order to make friendships in the diverse area of Maindee. Over the course of subsequent years it has matured into a friendship network with a significant inter faith dimension. It encompasses women of all faiths and none. The group meets to do arts and crafts, cooking and learning-based activities. It also organises events to share celebrations from each member's faith tradition and engage with passages of scripture to explore the meaning behind each festival.



Faith & Belief Forum youth participants at West Midlands Interfaith Hub leading a community kitchen for Inter Faith Week. Photo, Ruby Ali

ii) Youth inter faith initiatives

There are also some local youth inter faith initiatives. For example there are Faith & Belief Forum Youth Leadership groups in London and the West Midlands. The Feast Project brings together teenagers from different faiths and cultures to "build friendships, explore faith and change lives". There are also initiatives linked to local inter faith organisations (see Chapter 7 on Developing a successful programme).

iii) LGBT+ inter faith networks

There are also some LGBT+ inter faith networks. For example, the Glasgow LGBT+ Interfaith Network seeks to provide support and community for LGBT+ people of faith and belief. It also works for the visibility and acceptance of LGBT+ people of faith and encourages greater understanding and interaction between LGBT+ people of different faith backgrounds.



Yorkshire Asian Business Association and Northern (Rail) staff faith trail visiting places of worship in Bradford. Here at the Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara

x.com/yabasocial/status/159509989172158466/photo/1

iv) Workplace inter faith networks

Workplace staff inter faith networks are not local inter faith initiatives in the usual sense of that term but they are increasingly common. Where a workplace is based mainly in one area, they can also be thought of as part of the local inter faith landscape.

v) Single focus programmes and projects

There are also local inter faith initiatives with a particular focus, such as the environment. An example of an inter faith initiative working in a locality or region on a particular issue is the Liverpool-based Faiths4Change.

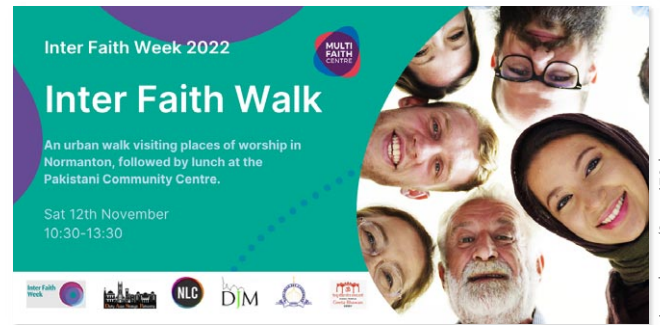
Faiths4Change

Faiths4Change's aims include "to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment and in particular to bring together faith communities to work towards improving the environment of disadvantaged communities in the North West of England." It has a wide programme of activities and partnerships and runs the Merseyside Faith and Climate Network. www.faiths4change.org.uk/about.html

4) Opportunities for local dialogue and cooperation as part of regional and national programmes

There are some regional organisations, such as the Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby and St Philip's Centre Leicester, which provide regular opportunities for local inter faith engagement.

A number of national inter faith initiatives, such as Religions for Peace UK, United Religions Initiative UK and the World Congress of Faiths, from time to time



tinyurl.com/2vmaj78d

hold events and meetings in different areas. For example, Religions for Peace UK's Women of Faith Network has taken an exhibition, called The Dignity of Women – Scriptural Reflections, to a number of locations to encourage discussion. The Faith & Belief Forum has been working with initiatives in some areas of London, the West Midlands and Greater Manchester on community engagement with a local inter faith dimension.

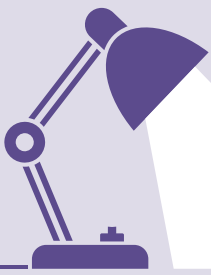
There are also programmes that run annually which encourage and showcase local inter faith activity. Inter Faith Week (England, Northern Ireland and Wales) and Scottish Inter Faith Week are times when a high number of local inter faith projects and events take place.



www.facebook.com/UKWFN/photos/a.1029323123745950/6520361547975386



www.lbbd.gov.uk/news/2022/barking-and-dagenham-celebrates-inter-faith-week-1



Focus on Aberdeen Interfaith Group

Aberdeen Interfaith Group (AIG) was formally established in 1993 by a group of individuals of faith who were keen to meet and learn from each other as part of a friendship group. It was created to:

- Gain more knowledge about those people we live alongside in our modern, global world, thus leading to a more peaceful, cohesive community
- Encourage and enable open minded dialogue and co-operation between faith/belief groups
- Reflect and enhance the friendship and support that exists between most people, counteracting the inter-religious conflict often shown in the media

AIG links people in its area from the Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jewish, Pagan, Episcopalian Church, Church of Scotland, Hindu, Muslim, Roman Catholic Church, Sikh, Unitarian and Humanist faith and belief traditions. It puts an emphasis on providing a positive safe space for people to meet and accept their community whilst respecting each other's differences.

AIG holds a wide variety of events such as discussion groups, visits to places of worship, tree plantings and an annual inter faith football tournament. The group collectively created an inter faith poem called 'Together' which has the theme of 'bridges'. They make an annual visit to the Buddhist Varapunya Meditation Centre for Interfaith Mindfulness Day in Mental Health Week (See page 56).

The group takes part in Scottish Interfaith week each year, holding an Interfaith Forum event in collaboration with Grampian Regional Equality Council. It also plays a part in marking Holocaust Memorial Day in Aberdeen and has commemorated that through author-led book discussions focusing on the Bosnian and Rwandan genocides as well as the Holocaust.

AIG members are active in the wider Aberdeen community. Members of the group come together at Christmas and Easter to prepare and serve food to the homeless. During the pandemic, through a grant from



Above: 'Faces of Faith' and 'Pupil-led exhibition'
Below: AGM and annual event



the Scottish Government via Interfaith Scotland, they purchased bags of rice and Somebody Cares made up 480 bags of rice to go in food parcels for the area. They have recently received a grant from the Scottish Refugee Council to organise a 'Sip and Share' programme which will provide an opportunity for Ukrainian, Syrian and Afghan refugees to be meet the local community.

AIG involve young people in inter faith activity by providing speakers to local schools, so children learn more about the faith and belief traditions in their community. They have also facilitated the creation of a local school inter faith group who participated in the Interfaith Scotland 'Faces of Faith' exhibition when it visited Aberdeen

www.rgc.aberdeen.sch.uk/newsarticlespage/~board/all-news/post/interfaith-society.

Every year, the group elects a secretary, a chairperson and a treasurer at their AGM. The group is run on a voluntary basis with representation from 13 different faiths.

interfaithscotland.org/local-interfaith-groups/aberdeen

Chapter 2: A local inter faith organisation for your area?

1) The important role of local inter faith organisations

Local inter faith bodies bring together people and organisations of different faiths – and sometimes non-religious beliefs – in their areas. They play a very important role in creating opportunities for learning and cooperation in their local communities.

There are over 250 such multi faith bodies in the UK today. See: www.interfaith.org.uk/involved/groups. There may already be inter faith events and initiatives in your area but not a local inter faith organisation. If so, perhaps you think that such an organisation would be helpful. There are many reasons why that might be.

2) Ways they make a difference

Local inter faith organisations can:

- Contribute, through their activity, to a cohesive and harmonious local community
- Offer a regular opportunity for members of the different local faith communities to come to know each other and develop relationships of mutual trust

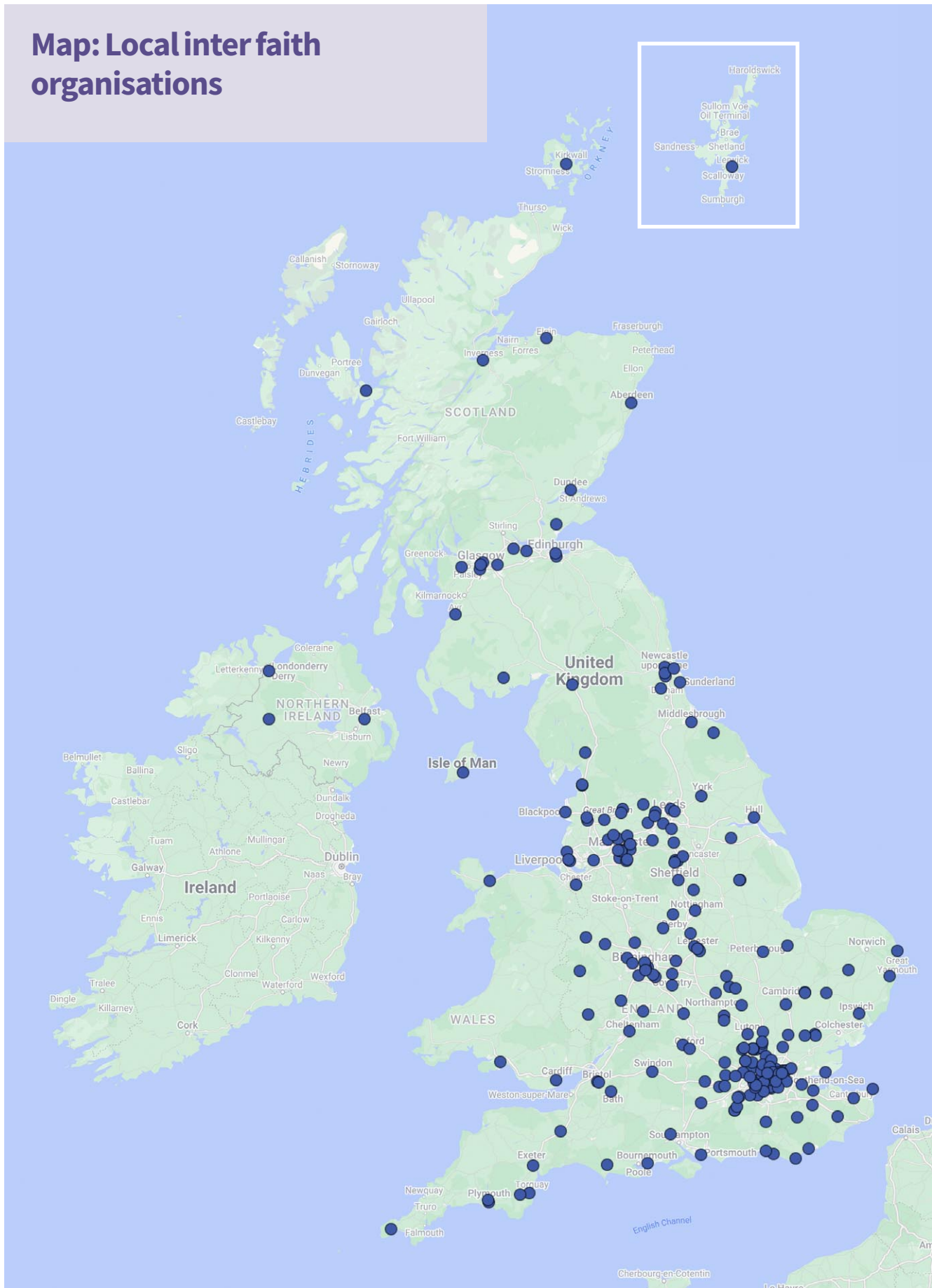
- Enable greater religious literacy through talks and discussions which allow deepened understanding of other's faiths and beliefs
- Help tackle prejudice and lessen the likelihood of tensions and discord by promoting interaction between different faith communities which fosters greater mutual understanding
- Respond to address tensions if these arise
- Bring people together in solidarity at times of joy or tragedy
- Help people of different faiths engage together with policies and projects for the benefit of their local community
- Contribute to their local area through inter faith social action projects
- Work with the local authority, emergency services, schools, SACREs and others to help them strengthen their engagement with local faith groups



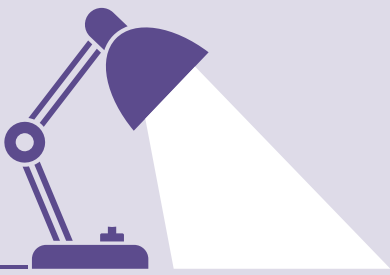
Brent Multi Faith Forum Peace Walk and Tree Planting

x.com/SaqJain_Ch_/status/1594440844483866624

Map: Local inter faith organisations



Map showing independent multi faith and bi and tri lateral (ie working with two, or three, faiths) local inter faith initiatives in the UK. You can find your nearest local group at www.interfaith.org.uk/locator.



Focus on Altrincham Interfaith Group

Altrincham Interfaith Group was set up in 2003 to bring together the major faith groups in the area, to help improve knowledge and understanding of one another, to develop friendships between people of the different faiths and to work together to make a positive contribution to the development of the community in Altrincham. Its vision is of “developing a cohesive community, where there is no fear of the ‘the other’ and at times of tension, nationally or internationally, the community can remain together and work together to ensure those tensions do not impact the peace and harmony of our town.”

The Group brings together representatives from Churches Together in Hale, Altrincham Christians Together, Churches Together in Timperley, Altrincham and Hale Muslim Association, Altrincham Unitarians, Hale Synagogue, Bowdon Synagogue, Menorah Synagogue, Manchester Reform Synagogue, Shaare Hayim Sephardi Synagogue and the World Council of Hindus, and Sikh and Buddhist members. These have recently been joined by representatives of the Church of the Latter-day Saints and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.

AIG organises talks and panel discussions, occasional exhibitions and holds an annual lecture and a biennial quiz. It also arranges visits to different places of worship in order help members understand each other’s forms of worship and to appreciate the different architectural styles. In recent years these have included several mosques, a mandir, gurdwaras, a Buddhist temple, synagogues, and churches of different denominations. The group comments that “These always prove to be real eye-openers, and provide a perspective on both similarities and differences between the faiths.

A distinctive aspect of AIG is its Friendship Circles. These are made up of about eight people of different faiths who meet in one another’s homes, initially perhaps three or four times a year. The purpose of these meetings is to develop friendships between local people of different faiths, in a relaxed environment, to gain insights into one another’s



Altrincham Interfaith Group visit to Buddhist Temple

traditions, and to discuss lifestyles and spiritual outlooks.

In February each year AIG arranges a shared meal at which each faith community brings along food, and people sit together on tables with members of each faith to enable dialogue in a relaxed setting. They also have a guest speaker from one of the faiths and the Mayor of Trafford. The dinners are very popular (around 150 attending) and the ticket sales support the Group’s work, with some proceeds donated to local charities.

AIG has held summer picnics when each person or family brings along food for themselves, and some to share while the group enjoy each other’s company and games are organised for the children. It also holds periodic Evenings of Entertainment, with music, dance and performance, storytelling, poetry and song.

Other activities include events involving young people, such as a ‘Young voices’ panel event, and events linked to Remembering Srebrenica, including a screening of ‘The Fog of Srebrenica’ via Zoom to coincide with the 26th Anniversary of the genocide.

The AIG recently celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a Grand Anniversary Tea party and hope that the group will continue to thrive for many years to come.

The group is run entirely by volunteers.

www.altrincham-interfaith.org.uk

Chapter 3: Preparing the ground and first steps

1) Some important questions

When thinking about the possibility of setting up a new local inter faith organisation, there are some questions which can be helpful to ask at an early stage:

- Are we clear that a new local inter faith organisation is needed? What is the unmet need?
- What is our inter faith approach and what is our vision?
- What kind of initiative/organisation might be best for our area?
- How will we consult on whether a local inter faith body is needed and who will we consult?
- What area do we wish the new body to serve?
- Who will make the project their top priority to ensure that it gets off the ground well?
- Will there be costs involved?

2) Establishing the need for a new body

A helpful first step is to gather information about what inter faith initiatives already exist in your area and what opportunities there are currently for members and leaders of different faith groups to engage on a regular basis. Set out what you think the need may be and whether a local inter faith organisation might help meet that.

Sometimes, a local authority plays a significant role in the development of a new initiative, for example in the case of the Middlesbrough Interfaith Network and the Southend Faith and Belief Forum. Or, a local organisation such as a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) or a university-based centre is asked to explore a new inter faith forum. This is more usually the case where a need is perceived for a body which will play a role in engagement with the local authority on policy and other areas.

Note: In some cases, faith forums emerge which are internal to local authorities rather than separate bodies. An example is Enfield Faith Forum which is co-

run by the local authority and police service. www.enfield.gov.uk/services/your-council/enfield-faith-forum

Developing a new 'Faith Alliance' for Derby

In 2021, the Multi Faith Centre at the University of Derby (MFC) brought together Derby's diverse faith communities to reflect on how they had been crucial partners in the city's emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to understand how Derby could use this experience to recover as a resilient, more collaborative city. Building on the momentum from the event, the MFC was tasked by the City's Stronger Communities Board to re-establish a faith forum or alliance in Derby.

The MFC has gone on to convene a Faith Steering Group with representatives from across different faith communities. The Steering Group has its own Terms of Reference and the MFC provides facilitation support. It is tasked with bringing forward proposals for a Faith Alliance. The Group has developed a Theory of Change for the Faith Alliance which articulates the infrastructure it thinks the city needs to support faith communities to play an increasingly active role in delivering core services across a range of policy areas.

The Centre then secured some funding for Faith Community Development Workers who are actively engaging those communities who historically have been hard to reach, underrepresented or unengaged. The aim there is to ensure that proposals for the Faith Alliance are tested and refined so that all communities have a platform to ensure their needs are heard. Networks are being re-established and new relationships formed. multifaithcentre.org/

Maidstone Inter-Faith Network's story

“Maidstone Inter-Faith Network (MIFN) was formed in 2018 when a few like-minded people of different faiths in Maidstone felt the need to develop stronger links between themselves and other faiths in the area. The network continues to grow: our mission is to promote, organise and support inter-faith activities in the Maidstone area to learn about faith and belief traditions, inform others, reduce misunderstanding and improve community relationships.

... It is made up of a number of members from different faiths and beliefs in the Maidstone area. We are a friendly group who are still growing and hope to welcome future members from other faith backgrounds in the near future.”
www.mifn.org.uk



Maidstone Inter-Faith Network members and speaker at meeting at Medway Christian Science Church

x.com/MaidstoneIFN/status/1594259204696674304

3) Inter faith approach

There may be a range of different perspectives on the part of those involved about why working for inter faith understanding and cooperation is important and how it is best taken forward. These perspectives may reflect differing bases in people's faith or belief traditions for inter faith engagement – as well as other factors.

IFN's member bodies subscribe to its principles, as set out in *Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Belief*. This short document can be a helpful document to draw on from the earliest planning stage. This is reproduced on page 18. It can be downloaded at www.interfaith.org.uk/code.

4) Aims, Vision, Mission and Values

If it is decided that a new local inter faith organisation is needed, it is important to agree its aims and helpful to work with other interested people to sketch out a simple vision for its work and the basics of its 'mission' and 'values'. This both helps frame the way ahead clearly and encourages and embeds a sense of shared ownership.

A Vision, Mission and Values statement sets out: the ideal world for your organisation; how your organisation is going to help achieve that vision; and the basic principles that guide who you are as an organisation and which form the basis of how you interact with others.

NCVO provides a helpful overview at: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/strategy-and-business-planning/setting-the-direction-of-your-organisation/#ways-to-describe-your-purpose-and-direction

Near Neighbours provides a resource for voluntary groups to think through their vision together: www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources

Overleaf, there are a couple of examples of how different groups have framed their vision, mission and values, in one case also adding their linked strategic objectives. There is no set way that has to be followed; what is important is clarity about the change it is hoped to make and how, and in what manner, that will be achieved.



Launch of Stockton-on-Tees Interfaith Forum by the Amal Project and Catalyst

tinyurl.com/2684hadu

Islington Faiths Forum – Mission, Objectives and Values

“Islington Faiths Forum is a dynamic community partnership comprising faith-based organisations and projects dedicated to uplifting the local community.

Our mission is to foster interfaith understanding and promote community dialogue, cohesion and initiatives across the Borough of Islington.

As a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), our core objectives include educating the public about diverse religious beliefs, emphasising their unique attributes, and identifying common ground to nurture harmonious relations. We strive to cultivate mutual respect and understanding.

Guided by our values of Respect, Peace, and Courage, Islington Faiths Forum pursues strategic objectives that encompass:

- Developing an extensive and inclusive network of faith groups in the Borough
- Supporting community development, cohesion and safety
- Providing representation and knowledge of faith communities to statutory and other agencies and to campaign and develop work on issues of importance for those communities
- Empower and support individual faith groups and smaller networks of faith groups to work together and have a voice.”

Islington Faiths Forum

www.islingtonfaithsforum.org.uk (About Us)

Oldham Inter Faith Forum’s Vision, Mission and Values

“The mission of Oldham Interfaith Forum is to promote harmony, understanding and cooperation between all members of the community, especially with regard to issues that relate to faith & belief.

Oldham Interfaith Forum will contribute to Oldham being an integrated society where no-one is excluded because of their faith, race, culture or origin; a town where everyone is valued and has a sense of belonging.

In its dealings with people of all faiths and none, Oldham Interfaith Forum will be open, friendly and supportive; will be respectful and sensitive, acting responsibly with transparency and integrity.”

oldhaminterfaith.org.uk/about-us/

Below are some examples of local inter faith body aims.

- to promote understanding and friendship between persons of different faiths
- to promote knowledge, understanding and mutual respect between the followers of different religions within our city
- to promote and maintain harmonious relations between people of different faiths in the town
- to make a public ‘statement’ by demonstrating that people of different faiths can talk and listen to one another
- to provide a means for faith communities to speak and act together on social and community issues
- to engage in dialogue which aims to promote social cohesion and oppose prejudice, injustice, and bigotry
- to work together to overcome ignorance, fear and misunderstanding between faiths
- to build bridges of trust and confidence based on greater understanding and knowledge of each other’s faiths, beliefs and customs
- to heal painful memories of religious bigotry and intolerance and attempt to create new memories born of new experiences of peace, harmony and understanding

- to explore shared values
- to be an inspiration and resource for the local community
- to involve faith, belief and cultural groups in the civic life of the borough
- to enable the council and local faith groups to discuss matters of mutual concern/interest
- to improve the quality of life for local people by working together on agreed projects demonstrating partnership between different faiths
- to be a representative voice for the faith communities
- to enable the voice of faith communities to be heard at all stages of local decision making and strategic planning

5) Different models – What kind of inter faith initiative might be best for our area?

There is no fixed model for local inter faith initiatives. What matters is to develop an initiative which, if an informal group, works for those involved, and, if a formal group with a planned visible role within the area, also:

- responds to what are seen as the main local inter faith needs
- can play a valuable role in developing and strengthening inter faith understanding and cooperation and shared engagement with wider society for the common good

- reflects the pattern of religious diversity in the area (and non-religious beliefs where groups decide to link those)
- has support from within local communities
- is clear in its approach and vision
- is sustainable

Some bodies are based on individual membership, some on organisational membership, and some on both. More is said about this in the chapter ‘Thinking about structure and process’.

Some local inter faith organisations have membership from non-religious belief bodies as well as faith groups.

A question often asked at an early stage is about whether a new local inter faith body seeks to be ‘representative’ or broadly ‘reflective’ of local faith communities. Several factors are relevant, such as the level of interest of the local authority and other statutory agencies in engaging with a multi faith body of this kind; the diversity of faith communities in the area; and the interest and capacity of faith groups and faith leaders to play a regular part.

To maintain a structure which has broad and consistent engagement from faith groups requires ongoing work to ensure that the pattern is maintained; that the ‘representatives’ of each faith community are in a position to articulate the concerns and needs of their community; and that their community is kept informed of the work of the inter faith body.

SOME MODELS OF LOCAL INTER FAITH ORGANISATIONS

- Groups which bring together people of different backgrounds to learn about their respective faiths or beliefs, discuss issues of common interest, hold occasional events, and deepen bonds of friendship.
- Councils or forums bringing faith/ belief groups together on a more formal basis. These are initiatives which are usually set up to include members from each or most of the faith communities in the area. Such bodies also usually have a programme of events to deepen inter faith understanding and cooperation but, because they reflect, or represent local faith groups (and sometimes belief groups), they may also be used as policy sounding boards by outside bodies such as local government.
- Hybrids/variants of the two models above.

Some areas also have groups of religious leaders who are convened to discuss issues of common concern to their communities. These may include clergy and/ or lay leaders.

Building good relations with people of different faiths and beliefs

In Britain today, people of many different faiths and beliefs live side by side. The opportunity lies before us to work together to build a society rooted in the values we treasure. But this society can only be built on a sure foundation of mutual respect, openness and trust. This means finding ways to live our lives of faith with integrity, and allowing others to do so too. Our different religious traditions offer us many resources for this and teach us the importance of good relationships characterised by honesty, compassion and generosity of spirit. The Inter Faith Network offers the following code of conduct for encouraging and strengthening these relationships.

As members of the human family, we should show each other respect and courtesy. In our dealings with people of other faiths and beliefs, this means exercising good will and:

- Respecting other people's freedom within the law to express their beliefs and convictions
- Learning to understand what others actually believe and value, and letting them express this in their own terms
- Respecting the convictions of others about food, dress and social etiquette and not behaving in ways which cause needless offence
- Recognising that all of us at times fall short of the ideals of our own traditions and never comparing our own ideals with other people's practices
- Working to prevent disagreement from leading to conflict
- Always seeking to avoid violence in our relationships

When we talk about matters of faith with one another, we need to do so with sensitivity, honesty and straightforwardness. This means:

- Recognising that listening as well as speaking is necessary for a genuine conversation
- Being honest about our beliefs and religious allegiances

- Not misrepresenting or disparaging other people's beliefs and practices
- Correcting misunderstanding or misrepresentations not only of our own but also of other faiths whenever we come across them
- Being straightforward about our intentions
- Accepting that in formal inter faith meetings there is a particular responsibility to ensure that the religious commitment of all those who are present will be respected

All of us want others to understand and respect our views. Some people will also want to persuade others to join their faith. In a multi faith society where this is permitted, the attempt should always be characterised by self-restraint and a concern for the other's freedom and dignity. This means:

- Respecting another person's expressed wish to be left alone
- Avoiding imposing ourselves and our views on individuals or communities who are in vulnerable situations in ways which exploit these
- Being sensitive and courteous
- Avoiding violent action or language, threats, manipulation, improper inducements, or the misuse of any kind of power
- Respecting the right of others to disagree with us

Living and working together is not always easy. Religion harnesses deep emotions which can sometimes take destructive forms. Where this happens, we must draw on our faith to bring about reconciliation and understanding. The truest fruits of religion are healing and positive. We have a great deal to learn from one another which can enrich us without undermining our own identities. Together, listening and responding with openness and respect, we can move forward to work in ways that acknowledge genuine differences but build on shared hopes and values.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK 'Code'

‘Representativeness’ in every respect is not a goal that most local inter faith bodies seek. A broad ‘reflectiveness’ is more usually what is sought, where the different groups are involved and designate members to attend, but where those are not necessarily seen as formal spokespersons for their community on every matter.

6) Consulting on plans

It is important to take time at the planning stage rather than launch an inter faith organisation without the preparation that it needs to give it a good chance of success. That gives time for conversations with the people who may be key to the initiative’s success and for scoping out the general faith and inter faith landscape and the needs that it is being developed to meet.

a) Who may it be helpful to consult first?

If the aim is to develop a relatively informal inter faith group based on individuals with a shared interest in inter faith matters, the organisers may already have friends and acquaintances of different faiths who could help set up such a group.

You could also contact your own or other local places of worship of the different faiths to see if any of their members are interested in the idea of an inter faith group; ask your local paper to run an article; or request your local radio station to produce an item about your interest in setting up a group and inviting others to a first meeting.¹

If the plan is to develop a more formal council or forum of faiths, however, it is common to begin by consulting the main faith communities (see (b) below) in your local area and to involve their key figures and ensure their commitment before widening the circle of participants. Be aware of the different groups and denominations within some traditions.

It can be helpful to make contact at an early stage with your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and local authority.

CVS’s hold information about local voluntary organisations and many have staff who are knowledgeable about their area’s faith community bodies.

¹ Some material in this and adjacent section drawn from the Faiths Working Together Toolkit, published by Near Neighbours with the Inter Faith Network for the UK in 2015 and updated in 2021.

Contact your local authority to find out which section leads on engagement with faith communities. Seek a conversation with the relevant officer about any relevant developments locally of which they are aware. They may have valuable information and experience and be able to offer support to the process. Your local authority may also be able to provide you with a list of places of worship, including contacts for local religious communities.

b) Reaching out to faith communities

Reach out to local places of worship. If there are local linking bodies, it can be useful to be in touch with these first. These are bodies such as ‘Churches Together’ groupings and local councils of gurdwaras, mosques or temples. If you want to ensure representation or reflection of different faith communities in your area, it is desirable to begin by consulting key figures from all of the main faith communities. It is also possible to contact local faith organisations through national faith community bodies. The latter approach can be particularly helpful if reaching out to smaller faith communities that may not have an established place of worship in your area.

Faith communities vary in their structures and the roles played by their religious personnel.

Chances of success are increased where emails are sent in advance and are followed up with phone calls, Zoom/Teams calls and personal visits to discuss the possible initiative. Physical visits are very important, where possible. It is impossible to overestimate the value of these conversations.

Consider whether contact should be made by you or whether there is another person who might have particular impact because they are of the same faith tradition as the body being reached out to or already have a relationship with key people in the community. If there is such a person, their active involvement might give confidence to members of that faith who might not be sure whether this is an initiative to which it is worth giving their time.

In the consultation process, ensure that people understand the basis of the new project and that it is based on values which include respect for difference as well as commitment to seeking genuine commonalities and working for the common good.

Inter Faith Week (in November) is a popular time to launch new local inter faith initiatives and can be a useful date to work towards.

7) What area should our inter faith initiative cover?

It is not always obvious exactly what area a new initiative should cover. Most initiatives serve one city, town or local authority area. However, there are also a small number that serve a large area such as a county or an area embracing several local authorities. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are inter faith structures which serve one neighbourhood or area of a town or city.

In some cases, an area may have religious diversity in terms of residents but few places of worship of different faiths because for historical reasons, people worship in places of worship beyond their own area. This can mean that is worth thinking about engaging beyond the authority boundaries.

Sometimes, there are two or more overlapping types of body and areas covered, serving different

purposes. The pattern of inter faith initiatives in Greater Manchester (see overleaf) illustrates this well.

8) Making the initiative a priority

Someone – or a small group of people – will need to make it a priority to take plans forward, consult and help set up the body. This is essential at the start up stage because an eye needs to be kept on the programme of personal visits, virtual meetings and phone calls and follow up as the planning begins. This also remains important as the initiative develops.

9) Start to plan the work!

At the same time as taking early steps to formalise a local inter faith organisation, its likely that first activities will be planned: perhaps a launch event and some early events. More is said about planning in Chapter 10.

MAKING CONTACTS IN PLACES OF WORSHIP

When working to get support from your local Christian church of any denomination, the minister (vicar, priest etc) might be the most helpful first point of call. Many areas will have structures through which Christian churches from different traditions engage together.

For a Hindu mandir or temple or Sikh gurdwara, you might wish to approach the committee or trustee board rather than a person with responsibility for particular ritual roles or aspects of teaching or spiritual care. A pandit (or swami) at a mandir, or a granthi at a gurdwara, may put you in touch with the right person, but their role is primarily a ritual one.

Patterns within Buddhist contexts vary and influence the role monks play in relation to their local community, although most temples and centres will welcome contact and have someone who can respond.

If you want to reach out to members of your local Muslim community it could be good to get the support of your local mosque or mosques. This might mean getting in touch with an imam at the mosque, particularly if you have met before. However, many mosques are managed by a Board of Trustees, which then employs the Imam. Sometimes the chair or president of the Trustees may be the best person to reach out to.

Within the Jewish community, you might find that the best approach to gaining the support from members of a synagogue is through contacting the rabbi. However, this will not always be the case, and an email to the admin office, for the attention of the synagogue chair, may also be a helpful approach.⁴

⁴ This section draws, in modified form, on material drawn from the Faiths Working Together Toolkit, published by Near Neighbours with the Inter Faith Network for the UK in 2015 and updated in 2021.

Greater Manchester: interconnecting layers of inter faith engagement

Greater Manchester (GM) is comprised of the metropolitan boroughs of Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan – each of which has its own local inter faith initiative. There is also a GM Muslim Jewish Forum and a Hindu Jewish Association, as well as a Manchester branch of CCJ and a Nisa-Nashim group.

There is a Greater Manchester Interfaith Network, which is a loose linking structure through which the local inter faith bodies in GM join for purposes such as holding periodic conferences and mutual support.

GM also has a ‘Faith and Community Leaders’ network, convened by the Anglican Diocese of Manchester.

Since 2021, there has also been a Greater Manchester Faith and Belief Advisory Panel which advises the Mayor of GM. This advisory panel is made up of representatives from existing inter faith organisations and of groups that represent specific religions. It is designed to provide them with more ability to influence decision-making across a wide range of policy areas and to provide a unified, city region-wide voice on the major contribution that faith communities make to society in areas such as housing, education, health and wellbeing, social care and neighbourhood cohesion. www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/new-panel-will-provide-strong-voice-for-faith-communities/

10) Resources for the new initiative

a) Human Resources

Most new local inter faith organisations do not have staff - and the majority continue on a volunteer run basis.

Where a local authority is involved in an initiative of this kind, it may be the case that a member of its staff can assist in the establishment and servicing of this.

i) Volunteers

Guidance on volunteering and working with volunteers can be found in such resources as:

www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/

www.gov.uk/guidance/involving-volunteers-in-your-organisation

ii) Safeguarding

It is very important to ensure that the new organisation takes measures from the outset to ensure safeguarding of those involved, including people who may come to events. A helpful resource is: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/safeguarding/

b) Financial resources

i) Sources of support

Thinking through the kinds of activities the new local inter faith body would like to undertake to carry out will begin to give a sense of what resources might be necessary. It may be that the plan is – in ways that have very little costs and where there are no paid employees. Even so, there are still likely to be occasional costs.

Possible sources of support for a local inter faith organisation’s activity include:

- membership fees
- fundraising activities
- in-kind support
- donations
- grants from trusts and/ or public sector bodies such as local authorities
- getting adopted as a local good cause and getting donations through, eg, a supermarket charity support scheme
- corporate sponsorship
- taking on service delivery contracts or undertaking trading activities, including charging for some services

Some local inter faith organisations operate with no regular income. The majority operate with modest budgets of less than £5,000 a year. A very small number of local inter faith organisations have significant levels

of grant funding and run largescale programmes, for example with schools, and employ a number of staff.

The income of most local inter faith bodies comes from membership fees, donations and periodic fundraising, supplemented from time to time with grants for particular projects or activities. A few also charge for services, such as visits to schools or diversity training.

If a local inter faith organisation acts as a consultative forum for a statutory body such as a local authority or the police, it might receive some funding from one or more of these to help cover expenses such as meeting spaces, secretarial support. However, some of these expenses might also be covered by in-kind support (eg access to free meeting space) rather than grants.

ii) Applying for grants

Although it is possible to operate on a very low budget and on voluntary assistance, grants can help local inter faith organisations develop and take forward programmes of work which are helpful to their areas. A funded part-time administrator, for example, can be a most valuable resource. For this reason, many groups do apply for grants on a regular basis.

If applying for funding from a trust or other grant funder, research them carefully, including reading the guidelines for the application process – which are often available online. Phone the clerk to the trustees of the trust/ grants administrator, if that is possible, and ask for advice in advance of sending an application. Check the application date and aim to apply well in advance. Make clear in your application:

- The purpose of the project – the need for it and its intended outcomes
- How the project will be run and information about it disseminated
- Who will be involved and who will benefit
- Why you are ideally placed to carry it out
- How you will monitor and evaluate the work

A number of useful resources on fundraising are available from Near Neighbours at www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources.

The Directory of Social Change publishes some of the main guides on grant givers www.dsc.org.uk/category/fundraising/ Your local library may have copies of these.

The National Lottery Community Support Fund can be a useful source of support. However, check with those involved in the local inter faith organisation whether all are content, in the context of their faith tradition, to accept Lottery funding, given its source in gambling.

11) Financial responsibilities

In registered charities and incorporated charities, the Board of Trustees (or ‘Committee’) of the organisation is ultimately responsible for its financial management and reporting. Often, day-to-day financial oversight is delegated to an Honorary Treasurer and/or a finance committee; however, overall responsibility for financial management and reporting remains with the Board as a whole. In unregistered charities that are not incorporated, the whole membership has responsibility (and liability) for the finances of the organisation, although day-to-day financial management may still be delegated to a committee.

For step by step guidance on charity finance, from banking to accounts and audit, visit: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/running-a-charity/financial-management/ See also: www.gov.uk/guidance/managing-charity-finances

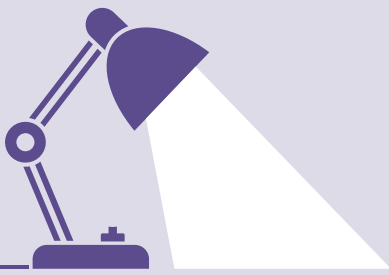
12) Insurance

For an overview of guidance relating to charities and insurance, see [CC49 – Charities and Insurance](#).

If an organisation employs staff, even on a part-time basis, there is a statutory obligation to take out employer’s liability insurance. If it has premises and/ or holds events, it may need public liability insurance. Contents and/ or buildings insurance may also be necessary.

If organising an activity, contact an insurance broker and also the local authority to ensure you have a correct level of cover. If using a venue, clarify who is responsible for insurance for the event or activity and holds the necessary public liability insurance certificates.

While incorporation limits the liability of trustees for debts incurred by a charity, trustees still have unlimited liability for their actions if a claim is made against them over a wrongful act, such as breach of trust. Many charities therefore take out Trustee Indemnity Insurance to further limit the liability of Trustees. This is explained further in CC49 as linked to above.



Focus on Barnet Multi Faith Forum

Barnet Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) was established in 2004 in response to an increase in communal racial and religious tensions in the London Borough of Barnet and out of a desire to promote social cohesion between the borough's faith communities. In the words of BMFF's committee, "We are volunteers representing the diverse faith communities and organisations across Barnet. We:

- Come together to engage in dialogue which aims to promote social cohesion oppose prejudice, injustice, and bigotry
- Uphold the right to practise our religion, faith and customs in safe neighbourhoods
- Advocate to ensure that values of freedom of expression are safeguarded.
- Aim to build bridges of trust and confidence based on greater understanding and knowledge of each other's faiths, beliefs and customs
- Ensure that faith communities have a voice in relevant matters affecting issues of faith and belief in the Borough
- Celebrate cultural diversity and recognise the additional value this brings to the Borough
- Support social action projects designed to enhance the environment and living conditions of all in the Borough"

BMFF partnered with Barnet Council to become the first London borough to adopt the 'Faith Covenant' created by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society and has subsequently re-signed that. It sees this as helping it ensure that faith communities have a voice in faith and belief related matters in the Borough.

The Forum supports many social action projects benefitting the local community, such as a tree planting at a local community forest garden. It also has action groups such as a Climate Change Group and a Loneliness Group. It holds regular discussions on issues of common concern such as racial justice,



Barnet Multifaitth Forum and Barnet Council renewing the Barnet 'Faith Covenant'

Islamophobia, suicide awareness and the cost-of-living crisis. It also plays an active part each year in Inter Faith Week and Holocaust Memorial Day, as well as marking a number of other special Days, Weeks and Months.

BMFF aims to ensure involvement of young people of faith. It recently elected two young members to its executive committee and is working to revive its Barnet Youth Faith Forum, post-pandemic. It has developed a partnership with Middlesex University and the University's staff Inter Faith Network, working with them to organise events such as inter faith iftars, a peace walk and a Faith and Action fair.

BMFF is a registered charity with a multi faith board of Trustees. Membership of it is open to representatives of faith organisations based in Barnet or serving faith communities living in the Borough and who have been invited to become members by the Forum. This includes representatives from educational institutions within the Borough and individuals belonging to faith organisations living in the Borough.

BMFF has recently begun to explore the development of a 'faith leaders' forum'.

barnetmultifaithforum.org

Chapter 4: Thinking about structure and process

1) Governance

A local inter faith organisation will be more likely to flourish if its work is underpinned by solid governance processes that enable it to operate effectively.

Good governance does not have to be cumbersome or complex, but it is vital to have.

Governance responsibilities include ensuring that the organisation:

- works effectively to carry out its purposes
- manages its financial and other resources appropriately
- complies with relevant regulations

Governance involves such steps as: setting the strategic direction of the organisation, including development of strategic plans and associated work plans; agreeing the standards against which success will be measured; and monitoring and evaluation.

If a local inter faith body has paid staff, they will have specific responsibilities supporting the implementation.

There are many good tools available on governance of voluntary organisations, such as:

Managing Without Profit: Leadership, Governance and Management of Civil Society Organisations, Fourth Edition, 2017 by Mike Hudson

The Charity Governance Code – a tool for charities to use in developing good governance. There are versions for smaller and larger charities.

CC3: The Essential Trustee – which sets out the requirements of charity Trustees and their responsibilities. It is published by the Charity Commission.

Also helpful are such resources as: the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, which provides guidance for charities such as:

www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/running-a-charity/; the Association of Chairs www.associationofchairs.org.uk/, which supports

chairs of charities large and small; and Near Neighbours, which has produced a number of relevant resources, such as those at: www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources

2) Types of voluntary organisation structure

Types of organisational structure that can be helpful to consider as you develop your work:

Charitable unincorporated associations

Most voluntary groups, when they begin, are ‘unincorporated associations’. Where their purposes are solely charitable, they are considered ‘charitable unincorporated associations’. Such bodies must register with the Charity Commission if they have income over £5,000. Prior to registration, they are considered ‘unregistered charities’ – still regulated by the Charity Commission, but not needing to report to it annually.

In unregistered charitable unincorporated associations, all members of the association are liable for the actions and finances of the charity, even if some decision-making is delegated to a committee. In a registered charitable unincorporated association, the Trustees alone carry this liability. Charities cannot register with the Charity Commission voluntarily if their income is below £5,000 unless they take the CIO route (see below).

Charitable company (limited by guarantee)

A charitable company is a charity that has ‘incorporated’. This means that it has become a ‘body corporate’ (usually a company) under UK law and registered with Companies House. As an incorporated body, the liability of Trustees/ members is limited, and contracts etc can be entered into in the name of the company itself rather than the Trustees/members personally. Incorporated bodies can also hold land, employ staff and so forth.

All charities incorporated prior to 2013 (ie prior to the introduction of CIOs) are charitable companies unless they have subsequently changed their status. Being registered with Companies House and the Charity

Commission means that the body must report annually to both regulators.

Charitable incorporated organisation

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status was introduced in 2011 in Scotland and in 2013 in England and Wales to simplify the registration and reporting requirements for charitable bodies while offering the benefits and protections of incorporation (such as limited Trustee liability). Bodies wishing to become a CIO only need to register with and report to the Charity Commission, not Companies House. There is no minimum income threshold to register as a CIO, making this option also the only route to registered charity status for bodies with an income under £5,000.

Trust

Trusts are unincorporated bodies that may or may not be charitable. Most local inter faith organisations have some form of membership, whereas Trusts do not have members. This legal form is, therefore, not expanded upon in this guide.

There are various useful guides to the different legal forms, including CC22a, www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-types-how-to-choose-a-structure and NCVO's guidance on choosing a legal structure www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/setting-up/choosing-your-legal-structure/

For details on registering as a charity see CC21b on the Charity Commission website www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-register-your-charity-cc21b and, eg, www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/setting-up/understanding-charity-status-and-registration/

3) Developing a constitution

Model constitutions for charities and CIOs of different types can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-a-charity-model-governing-documents

NCVO also has helpful guidelines at: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/setting-up/a-charitys-governing-document-what-it-should-include/

Here are some examples of different kinds of local inter faith organisation constitutions. They vary in level of detail, in part depending on whether or not they are a registered charity. They are not provided as

models, but may be interesting to those working on their own constitutions.

- [Barnet Multi Faith Forum](#)
- [Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group](#)
- [Cheltenham Interfaith](#)
- [Devon Faith and Belief Forum](#)
- [Ipswich Faith and Community Forum](#)
- [Concord Leeds Interfaith Fellowship](#)
- [Loughborough Council of Faiths](#)
- [Maidstone Interfaith Network](#)
- [Oxford Council of Faiths](#)
- [Reading Inter Faith Group](#)
- [Wolverhampton Interfaith](#)
- [York Interfaith](#)

a) Charitable purposes

Many inter faith organisations have as constitutional objects (aims or purposes) 'the promotion of religious harmony' – an aim which it has been possible to use from 2006; they may also have other objects that are legally accepted as being charitable purposes, such as education. For more about charitable purposes, see:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/charitable-purposes/charitable-purposes

b) Membership

The majority of local inter faith groups opt to have some form of membership structure (ie space needed). The most common kind is a formal membership where the members have some role in governance, such as electing the Trustees and amending the governing documents.

Some helpful questions to consider include:

- Will we have members?
- Will membership be formal or informal?
- Will full membership be open to individuals, organisations, or both?
- What will be the criteria for membership?
- Will there be associate members?
- What will be the key decision making structures?

If setting up a more formal 'forum' or 'council', it will be helpful to discuss how faith body members will be nominated by their communities, if that is relevant.

Local inter faith organisations vary in their criteria for membership. Membership may be, for example, open to people and/or organisations which meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Support of the body's aims
- Living, working or worshipping in the area the body serves
- From faiths/ beliefs with a presence in the local area
- Of particular faiths/ beliefs as set out in their constitutional documents

The Equality Act 2010 requires that organisations (including charitable associations) do not discriminate directly or indirectly against people on the basis of their religion or belief (among other protected characteristics). There are exceptions built into the Act that permit religion or belief restrictions to be placed on membership¹ of organisations whose purpose is "to foster or maintain good relations between persons of different religions or beliefs"² because of the purposes of the organisation.³ However, these provisions are largely untested.

4) Committee make up and development

a) Diversity and breadth of skills

If you are setting up a more formal type of organisation, it is helpful to think from an early stage about developing your committee to reflect the diversity of your membership and also other important dimensions such as breadth of ages and skills. Why not consider, for example, appointing a youth trustee or trustees or 'observer'.

b) Trustee / committee member development

It can be useful for Trustees / committee members to continue to develop their skills and to deepen their effectiveness as a team.

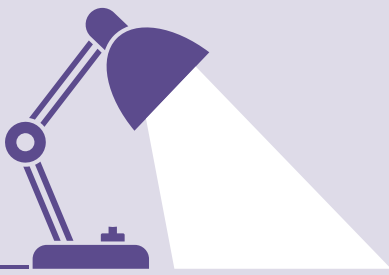
There are many useful resources available, for example NCVO guidance available at www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/governance/

and resources such as Building Better Governance – good practice guides developed by the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Bayes Business School, City, University of London:
www.bayes.city.ac.uk/faculties-and-research/centres/cce/reports-guides-and-research/building-better-governance

¹ Equality Act 2010, Schedule 23, 2.(3)(a)

² Equality Act 2010, Schedule 23, 2.(1)(e)

³ Equality Act 2010, Schedule 23, 2.(6)(a)



Focus on Birmingham Council of Faiths

Birmingham Council of Faiths (BCF) has its origins in Birmingham Interfaith Council, which was founded in November 1974, originally to act as an official platform for matters of concern to members of the various faith groups which were then settling locally in significant numbers.

BCF's aim is to promote knowledge and mutual understanding of the beliefs and practices of religious faiths so that the followers of any one faith may have a better understanding of the other faiths and be alert to issues of peace, justice and mutual support in Birmingham. It organises events throughout the year to facilitate harmonious relations between people of different faiths in the city.

BCF has two subgroups: Faith Footsteps for a Low Carbon Future which is concerned about the environment and reducing the progress and effects of climate change; and Faiths Promoting Health and Wellbeing Forum, which holds bimonthly webinars discussing a range of topical health related topics.

Each year, it carries out, often in partnership, a number of initiatives. Recently it assisted with a Community Faith Map locating 720 places of worship and was part of the process leading to re-signature between faith communities and Birmingham City Council and an expanded range of partners of the 'Faith Covenant' (see more on pages 43-44). It has also been developing a Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) Network so every faith setting can have access to a trained safeguarding advisor and access to good quality safeguarding training and it is creating a repository of safeguarding training and resources specifically designed for faith-based organisations and a safeguarding Toolkit and Guidance,

BCF also coordinates Inter Faith Week in Birmingham each year, and works in partnership with a wide range of other bodies including City of Sanctuary and Compassionate Communities.

**15th Annual
Faiths for Fun
2023**

Sunday 12th March 2023
Time: 1.30pm – 5.00pm
Cost: £2 Per Participant

Address: 31st Sutton Coldfield, West Scout Building
Aldridge Road, Streetly, B74 2EB

Open to all from 7–12 years of **all faiths and none** (NOT just Scouts and Guides) to **have FUN**, get to **know each other** and **learn something** together about each others' faiths.

Refreshments at half time
(Vegetarian, Kosher & Halal)

Certificates to be awarded to all

Register online at www.faithsforfun.co.uk

For more details,
Dr Peter Rookes | E: pjrookes@gmail.com
or Text 07703 336 088

BCF
BIRMINGHAM
COUNCIL OF FAITHS

WE DISCOVER, WE GROW
Girlguiding

Scouts
Birmingham

In 2024 it held its 16th annual Faiths for Fun event for children aged 7 to 12, which is open to those of all faiths and none, held jointly with Birmingham Scouts and Birmingham Guides.

BCF currently represents Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Zoroastrians. Participants from further groups are found among its wider membership.

BCF is run on a voluntary basis, with projects from time to time supported by grants.

bhamfaiths.org.uk/

Chapter 5: Names and logos

It is helpful to choose a clear and memorable name and to create a good logo. This can then be used on all forms of communications such as websites, social media, emails and flyers.

1) What shall we call ourselves?

There can be much debate about names!

Names of local inter faith organisations usually include the name of the area they serve. For example: Bradford Concord Interfaith Society, Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum, Faiths Together in Lambeth, Gateshead Interfaith Forum, Mansfield Interfaith Group, Mid Essex Interfaith Forum, Oxford Council of Faiths, Peterborough Inter-Faith Council, Renfrewshire Interfaith Group, Salford Interfaith Network, Slough Faith Partnership, South Cardiff Inter Faith Network, and Torbay Faith and Belief Forum.

Some options for the second part currently used by groups include:

- Council of Faiths
- Faith Alliance
- Faith and Belief Forum
- Faiths Forum or Faith Forum

- Faiths Together
- Faiths United
- Interfaith
- Inter Faith Association
- Interfaith / Inter Faith Network
- Inter Faith Council
- Inter Faith Forum
- Inter Faith Group
- Multifaith Forum
- Multifaith Partnership
- People of Faith

Sometimes, a name reflects a particular emphasis in a body's work, such as Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action and Medway Inter Faith Action.

Some organisations use 'interfaith' in their name. Others prefer to use 'inter faith' or 'inter-faith' because of a concern that the use of the single word 'interfaith' could give the impression that the different faiths are being mixed up or their distinctness played down.



Nork Kirklees Interfaith members launching its new logo

2) Logos

A simple and distinctive logo can help ensure an organisation is instantly recognisable and memorable.

As can be seen from the spread of examples on page 30, local inter faith organisations have chosen a wide variety of different kinds of logo.

There are many short guides to producing an effective logo, for example this one from the graphic design platform Canva: www.canva.com/learn/what-makes-a-good-logo/ and this one from Wix: www.wix.com/blog/good-logo-design-tips

Bedford Council of Faiths (BCF)

BCF adopted a new logo as part of a re-launch. This was created for it by two students from the local Further Education College.

The petals within the logo represent the inclusivity, diversity and togetherness promoted by the Bedford community and BCF.

The updated logo was launched with a social media campaign – ‘*Bedford is colourful*’.



Sometimes, where there has been funding available, local inter faith initiatives have used designers to assist on developing their logo.

Interfaith Glasgow

When Interfaith Glasgow began it commissioned design of a logo to give identity and impact to its work.



The logo designer writes: "As this was a new project that wanted to speak to a number of faith groups, we wanted to come up with an identity that encapsulated the diverse groups that they were trying to engage with, but also focus on the commonalities of each group, namely faith and the fact they were all based in the Glasgow area.

The logo focuses on the tree that is featured in the Glasgow coat of arms, which is based on a religious story. We liked the association of growth but using colour to associate the diverse nature of Interfaith Glasgow and the religious groups that they deal with on a daily basis."

[Interfaith Glasgow - Contribute \(wecontribute.co.uk\)](http://wecontribute.co.uk)

North Kirklees Interfaith (NKI)

NKI has recently created a logo for the first time. Members decided that a well-designed and memorable image would help the group become more recognisable as an organisation. They commissioned a local designer from the charity sector and gave her a brief for the design. They were keen that the design reflect their values and their commitment to social action. The resulting design features a tree: a powerful symbol in many faith contexts and a sign of the group's concern for environmental issues. NKI launched the logo with the adopting of a tree at Jo Cox Community Wood in Liversedge.



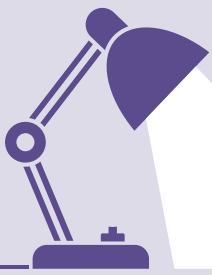
Overleaf are examples of logos from: Building Bridges Pendle; Cheltenham Interfaith; Faiths Together in Croydon; Fife Interfaith Group; Hounslow Friends of Faith; Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes); Islington Faiths Forum; Leeds Faiths Forum; Loughborough Council of Faiths; Luton Council of Faiths; The Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester; North Kent Interfaith; Norwich InterFaith Link; Nottingham Inter Faith Council; Oldham Inter Faith Forum; Southampton Council of Faiths; South Cardiff Interfaith Network; Town Hamlets Inter Faith Forum ; Watford Interfaith Association; and Worcestershire Interfaith Forum.

Some other examples of local inter faith group logos:



Norwich InterFaith Link





Focus on Cornwall Faith Forum

Cornwall Faith Forum was formally established in 2008. It is one of a small number of inter faith organisations whose activities span such a wide rural geographical area.

CFF's members include people from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Pagan faith communities in the county and also Humanists and anyone 'seeking their path towards peace'. Its vision is 'finding common ground' and it works towards that through three strands: Learning for Peace, Sharing for Peace and Building for Peace.

It works to help faith groups get to know each other better and build trust and confidence across the barriers of ignorance and prejudice. It does this in a variety of ways such as: opportunities to join faith festival celebrations; faith walks exploring spaces and buildings associated with different communities; dialogues; talks; and cultural events. It works with Kehillat Kernow (the Jewish community in Cornwall), Devon and Cornwall Police and Truro Cathedral each year to hold a Holocaust Memorial Day Service. At times of trouble or sadness it brings people together for support and reflection.

Since its early days, CFF has been working to establish an Inter Faith Centre for Cornwall – a building which can be used by all faith groups and seekers: Dor Kemmyn – Cornish for Common Ground. It has planning permission for that in a field at Penmount on the edge of Truro and is fundraising for it. In the meantime, it holds many outdoor events in the 'Peace Field', from prayers and reflections to vigils at times such as the murder of George Floyd, to religious events such as a Pagan celebration of the Autumn Equinox, to community lunches, and tree plantings.

On the surface Cornwall is one of the least diverse areas in the United Kingdom. School pupils have few chances to grow up with and mix with other children of different faith backgrounds. So, CFF provides a faith speakers service for schools and colleges. With a grant from St Luke's foundation it has created a set of video interviews of college aged young people about



Some members of the Forum at its Peace Pole

how faith impacts their lives and especially the challenges of the lack of others from their faith community.

Working with students on Falmouth University BA Animation course CFF helped create two animations based on the Holocaust testimony of Blanka Engelberg, the mother of a member of Kehillat Kernow. The animations are foundation of a new education pack and have won a Royal Television Society Students Award.

For a number of years CFF worked with partners to run a Refugee Community Link Project which welcomed refugees from Syria and helped them settle. Wellbeing of refugees is a continuing thread in its work.

CFF has a part-time development worker and has also benefitted from some support across the years from the Diocese of Truro.

dorkemmyn.org.uk

Chapter 6: Times and places

It is essential that people feel comfortable about participating in a local inter faith organisation's activities. Choice of venue and timing of meetings can have a strong bearing on this – especially for people who are taking part for the first time.

1) Timing

When planning events or meetings, check that they will not clash with key festivals or regular times of observance of a group that you are hoping to involve.

a) Festivals

Information about religious festivals is available on the IFN website. This information has been compiled using the Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals and is used with its permission. IFN also produced a short guide to greeting those of other faiths on their key festivals each year, developed with its Faith Communities Forum. The full Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals can be found at shapcalendar.org.uk, and a booklet can be ordered from Shap explaining the significance of each festival.

The dates of the festivals of all faiths are based on their own calendars. These are, in many cases, linked to the solar and lunar cycles and dates will change each year in relation to the Gregorian calendar used in the UK. So, it is very important to check these each year.

It is also a good idea to ask members to indicate which faith festival dates are best avoided when scheduling meetings.

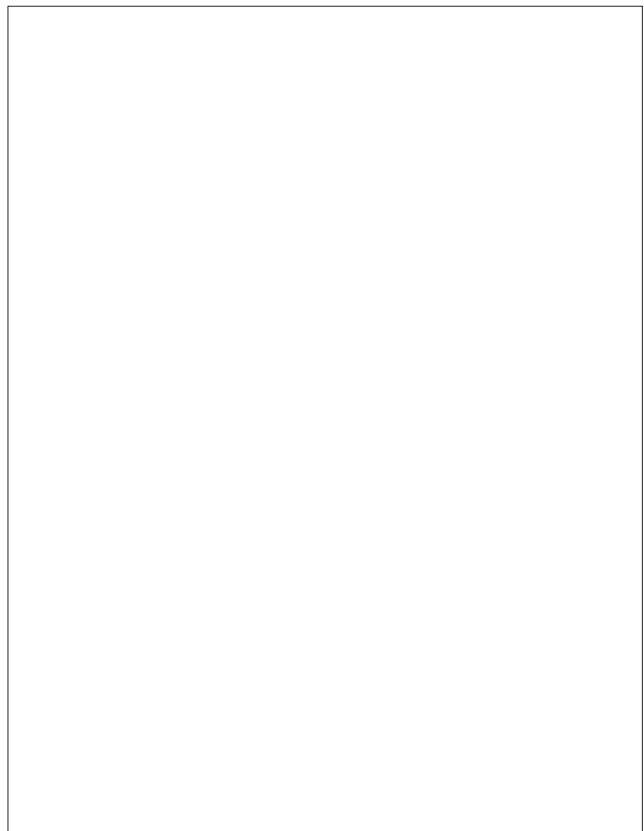
Preparation for festivals such as Diwali and Passover sometimes begins some days ahead of the date listed in the calendar and this can affect people's ability to attend events.

b) Days and times

It is important to consult members of all faith traditions involved about the days that are significant for them. The main Muslim congregational prayer takes place at lunchtime on Fridays, Jews observe the Sabbath from Friday evening until the end of daytime on Saturday and most church-going Christians traditionally gather to worship on a Sunday morning. Other faith communities will also have days which are significant for them, although these may vary.

Some local inter faith organisations, such as Islington Faiths Forum, create their own calendar each year (see below).

During day-long events, it is helpful to leave times when those who wish can retire separately for prayer or meditation. It is equally important to ensure that there is a suitable place for this.



www.islingtonfaithsforum.org.uk/?page_id=132

Muslims are required to pray five times a day at specific times. There is some flexibility of time according to circumstances, but it is desirable to provide space for prayer as well as suitable washing facilities and a mat or sheet for covering the floor for prayer.

c) Special observances

Some faith traditions have extended fasting periods which it is a courtesy to bear in mind. For example, consult with Baha'i members who fast during the period in March and Muslim members about a timing of any events during the period of Ramadan when they fast from dawn to sunset. Some Christians fast on days during the period of Lent, and in particular on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Members of some

other faiths, such as Hindus and Jews, also fast at particular times.

Varying meeting days and times can attract a more diverse range of people.

Exploring different times for meeting – an example from Swansea

Swansea Inter Faith Forum holds meetings at different times of day to enable people with different patterns of commitment to attend. Its Chair comments that it can be good to vary approaches and not just to go with a standard approach: “We recently held a meeting, at a local Catholic church, about freedom of belief, linked to the International Ministerial Conference. We started it at 6pm with a meal brought in from a local restaurant with which some Muslim members have links. It was close to the end of the working day and so a number of people came straight from work while others came from home. The early meal meant that they came in and immediately sat down with people they didn’t know and started talking with them. The speakers also joined in the meal and talked with everyone. It worked really well.”

2) Venues for meetings and events

a) Secular premises

It can be helpful to hold some meetings in ‘neutral’, secular, premises such as community centres, schools or town halls – particularly in the early days of an initiative.

b) Faith community premises

Sometimes local inter faith bodies use meeting spaces in different local faith community venues in rotation. This gives members a chance to experience the hospitality of different faith groups. Rotating the venue helps to avoid undue identification with one particular faith tradition and to encourage a wider sense of ownership and involvement.

Meeting at faith venues – an example from Loughborough

Loughborough Council of Faiths rotates the venue for its monthly meetings and posts images on social media.



Loughborough Council of Faiths
@LCoFaiths

Regular monthly business meeting, at Geeta Bhavan. On this evening’s agenda: election of officers; planning for Diwali, Week of Prayer for World Peace, Remembrance Sunday, Inter Faith Week, Human Rights Day, Holocaust Memorial Day; involvement with local schools @IFWeek @HMD_UK



x.com/LCoFaiths/status/1572688042137092096

When using faith community venues, it is important that members are aware of any requirements of a particular place of worship. For example, on entry to a Sikh gurdwara, visitors are asked to remove their shoes, wash their hands and cover their heads entry and they should not carry alcohol, drugs or tobacco products (including vapes) on their person.

It is helpful to make any faith venue hosts aware of possible sensitivities of the meeting participants from other traditions. For example, sometimes when a meeting takes place there is also worship in another part of the building and hosts may invite local inter faith organisation members in to see this while showing them their place of worship. It is important that expectations of both hosts and guests are made very clear in advance and that no one feels obliged to respond to kind invitations to participate in ways which make them feel uncomfortable.



Nottingham Inter Faith Council meeting at the Al Khazra Mosque. Photo: IFN

c) Meetings hosted at other locations

Sometimes connections with other local bodies lead to a chance to meet in the premises and also deepen that link.



Karenza @Karenza_RRC

Absolute delight to be at the County Durham Faiths Network meeting generously hosted by the education team @durham_uni #OrientalMuseum and Chaired by @RevdGavinWort



x.com/karenza_rrc/status/172412972232123899

d) Online and hybrid meetings

Having some online and hybrid meetings also helps engage those who may find travel to meetings difficult because of very busy schedules, disability or health factors.

Holding a hybrid meeting is more complicated than holding one in person or wholly online. Advance planning is needed to ensure that all participants feel equally part of the meeting - able to see, hear and contribute fully.

See Chapter 9 Communications for pointers about holding successful hybrid meetings.

Using in-person and online events – an example from Swindon

Swindon Interfaith Group’s 2021 Inter Faith Week programme is an example of a creative combination of in-person and online events and resources.

The programme included an in-person event held by the Latter-day Saints, involving a church tour and activities for teens; an evening at a Sikh gurdwara to join in with prayer, hymns and sukhasan; a virtual interactive interfaith devotional event and film night hosted by the local Baha’i community; a virtual event with the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification with a film and information session; an opportunity to join an in-person Muslim Sufi Devotional; and an in-person celebration marking 30 years of the Group’s work.

The Group also used its website and social media accounts to share video recordings and useful educational resources from events throughout the week.

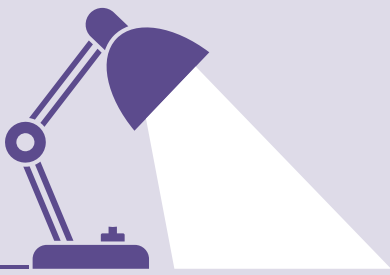


Thank you to all that joined our hybrid Forum meeting last night, great discussion and collaboration. Special thanks to our speakers from @TowerHamletsNow and support from @TowerHamletsCVS



CWMChaplaincy and 7 others

x.com/THInterFaith/status/166600100786808832



Focus on Fermanagh and Omagh Interfaith Group

Fermanagh and Omagh Interfaith Group (FOIG) emerged following an audit in 2017 of minority faith communities in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area as part of the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Good Relations Action Plan. This was part of a wider piece of work aiming to build leadership, understanding and respect between the different faiths and beliefs that exist across the Council area and to promote good relations and dialogue across the district.

FOIG aims to promote mutual understanding between all faith traditions in the local community. Its activities include dialogues, visits and other types of event. For example, for Good Relations Week, it partnered with the local council to organise a guided tour of Belfast City Cemetery and to hold a facilitated workshop which examined the peace process in Northern Ireland through the lens of a piece of artwork.

FOIG also marks Inter Faith Week. It has organised events such as a film screening, talk and dialogue

focusing on Abdu'l-Baha, Head of the Baha'i Faith from 1892 to 1921, at the time of the Anniversary of his death, hosted with the council; coffee conversations, book discussions and an inter faith quiz. For IFW 2022, members and local volunteers assisted by Council staff planted twenty trees and many crocuses in a garden created by a group of volunteers from different faith backgrounds. They also created and buried a time capsule containing faith and cultural artefacts from groups in the district to be unearthed in 100 years' time.

The group is run on a voluntary basis with some administrative assistance and support towards events from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Good Relations programme assisted by The Executive Office.

[Good Relations – Fermanagh & Omagh District Council \(fermanaghomagh.com\)](http://fermanaghomagh.com)



Fermanagh and Omagh Interfaith Group members with Mayor at Inter Faith Week tree planting and burying of special time capsule

Chapter 7: Some aspects of engagement – dialogue, inclusion and partnership

This chapter considers some important aspects of approach to dialogue, diversity and inclusion, and partnership.

1) Discussion and dialogue

a) Dialogue

A key part of most local inter faith bodies' programmes is discussion meetings on religious and social topics. The term 'dialogue' is sometimes used for these.

Where the term 'dialogue' is used in this guide, it is with the meaning of a conversation or written exchange which is a mutually respectful exploration of views with the hoped for outcome of greater understanding. It is different from 'debate', which is a form of discourse which involves a probing of weaknesses in another's position and arguing for one's own. Dialogue is as much about listening and hearing as it is about talking.

b) Dialogue ground rules and practicalities

When holding discussions and dialogues, it is helpful to agree ground rules and to prepare carefully. Some topic areas can be difficult because of deeply held views that may differ. Where that is the case, particular care needs taking in preparation,



IFN Inter Faith Week intern and Executive Director

facilitation and follow up. On the following pages are some 'pointers for productive dialogue'.

One of IFN's earliest publications was its code: *Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs*. This was developed in 1993 by a multi faith working group in consultation with all of IFN's member bodies and is endorsed by all organisations that join IFN. It provides important principles for dialogue. It is reproduced in full on page 18. Among its principles is that in our encounters with people of other faiths and beliefs we should 'exercise good will', speak 'with sensitivity, honesty and straightforwardness' and that our manner 'be characterised by self-restraint and a concern for the other's freedom and dignity'. Also helpful is IFN's [Let's Talk: Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue](#).



Participants in dialogue at IFN meeting

Examples of two different sorts of guidelines, County Durham Faiths Network and Exeter Faith and Belief Forum, are below.

County Durham Faiths Network provides an example of how a particular approach to mutual sharing and learning informs their overall approach. In the box below are guidelines that they give to external speakers to explain.

County Durham Faiths Network: a ‘dialogue of hearts and minds’

County Durham Faiths Network (CDFN) seeks to promote and foster inter faith dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect and to help people from different faith and belief traditions to engage with one another to increase mutual understanding. It is our conviction that this is best done through means of sharing where individuals tell their personal stories and help others to reflect on theirs. We believe that when people share face to face, and encounter others as fellow human beings, understanding and respect will emerge.

Each speaker talks for 6–8 minutes and then we pause for a minute’s silent reflection before moving on to the next contributor. Although we don’t give opportunities for questions/ comments/debate, there feels as though there’s a deeper dialogue in hearts as well as minds.

Recent topics covered include ‘significant texts’, ‘sacred spaces, special places’ (held in conjunction with a display of Wolfgang Weilder’s ‘Kiosk’), ‘helping those in need’ and ‘human flourishing: living well in challenging times’.

In addition to inter faith sharing events, all CDFN meetings include an opportunity for inter faith sharing on a variety of topics.

Exeter Faith and Belief Forum discussion guidelines

As an interfaith dialogue group we have worked together for over 10 years to build trust and friendship between the many faith and belief communities in Exeter...Our guidelines for discussion are:

- All contributions to be courteous and constructive – only one person speaks at a time
- Listen to one another – keep contributions brief and to the point
- Respect other peoples’ right to their views – avoid intemperate, provocative or abusive language

- Only speak from your own faith or belief perspective, not on behalf of another tradition

2) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

a) Creating a positive and equitable environment

Thinking about equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is important as it is part of creating and sustaining a positive and equitable environment where people feel valued, feel a sense of belonging and are able to contribute well. It can also lead to strengthened engagement between local inter faith organisations local faith communities and other groups.

The aspects of identity protected under law are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

There are three dimensions to engaging with EDI that groups may wish to consider: learning more; aiming to develop the group’s own work and practices to reflect that learning about diversity; and reaching out to raise awareness and understanding.

i) Learning

Learning can take many forms, for example:

- Providing opportunities for members to speak from their own perspectives about relevant aspects of their identity and listening actively to them
- Hearing about how people experience overlapping aspects of identity – for example being of a particular faith and having a disability
- Inviting speakers on EDI issues
- Holding a joint event, for example with a local organisation supporting the elderly or working with young people

Some pointers for productive dialogue

Preparing for dialogue

Think about topics, participants and format

- What is the topic of focus?
- What are the desired outcomes?
- Who might you involve?
- Will there be a facilitator – and, if so, who might be suitable?
- Do certain areas need particular care in discussion? If so, how would these be addressed if they were to arise during the dialogue?
- Might it be helpful to consult or involve a person/people with relevant expertise who can be drawn upon in the course of the dialogue?
- What advance preparation may be needed? For example, will there be useful materials for consultation during the dialogue (difficult issues are usually complex and sensitive and time and resources may be needed to enable participants to engage well with them)?

Thinking about time

- How much time is likely to be needed to enter into fruitful dialogue?
- How many topics can be covered in the time available, and what might have to wait for another time?

- If people do not know each other, will there be time for proper introductions?

Thinking about space

- Is the venue likely to be acceptable to all involved?
- Is there space for smaller groups to talk amongst themselves, or for participants to sit in a circle if wished?
- Is there a place within the venue that someone could go to if they felt a need for a break?

Other considerations

- Is there an expectation of confidentiality?
- Will the dialogue be subject to the Chatham House Rule, where ‘participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed’?
- Will a statement or report be produced at the end – if so, how will it be agreed and cleared?
- If the dialogue was to break down, or there were acrimonious exchanges, what plans are in place to end the dialogue and recover the good relations that might be affected?

The dialogue itself

Before the dialogue begins

Reaffirm that the dialogue is for mutual learning and to enable people to develop their understanding of the viewpoints of others; that it will build on commonalities, but honour difference and thought through disagreement; and that all dialogue will be respectful and open. Ensure that all agree upon:

- The principles upon which the dialogue is based
- The ground rules for all to follow
- The boundaries within which the dialogue will take place
- Whether people will speak formally in turn (at least initially) or whether there will be a more free style of conversation from the start (if this has not been agreed prior to the dialogue)
- The confidentiality of discussion; how it will be recorded; and that no record of the discussion will be published until it has been agreed by all the participants (or those to whom the task of clearance is delegated)

During the dialogue:

- Avoid assumptions about what is important to others in the dialogue – what might seem a small matter to one person can be a very important to another
- Ensure that issues are considered equitably
- Start and continue from a position of principled and respectful openness to views of others and allow all to express their views

When the dialogue finishes

- Depending on the nature and purpose of the dialogue, if possible, draw out key areas of agreement and points where difference remains and ensure that all participants are satisfied with the summary.
- Make sure that all participants know what is going to happen after the dialogue.
- Recognise that the process was about deepening understanding and helping to build better relationships between participants.

The local authority is likely to have a policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and may have engagement officers who would be pleased to engage and consult with the group.

Some inter faith organisations may also choose to invite external organisations to deliver diversity and inclusion courses to their group.

Edinburgh Interfaith Association

Edinburgh Interfaith Association invited the founder of My Way Access to speak about the rights of people with disabilities at their Interfaith Insights: Faith and Activism programme.



www.instagram.com/p/CIgMD4K_69/

ii) Developing inclusive ways of operating

For local inter faith organisations, the aspect of identity that is to the fore is likely to be religion and belief. However, it can be helpful to develop an overall approach or strategy for developing an inclusive approach, thinking about such questions as:

- How/do we make people who self-define as having other protected characteristics feel welcome?
- How do we understand ‘equality’, ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ and why do we view these as important for inter faith dialogue and engagement?
- What may be our own personal biases – are we even fully aware of those?
- Are there areas we think we are already doing well? Others where we perhaps could do more?
- How might we find out the wider local community sees our level of inclusiveness?
- Are our meetings accessible to those with disabilities (step-free, audible, etc)?
- What practical steps might we take across the coming year to engage with, say, two strands of identity?

It is helpful to provide opportunities within your organisation and with your local community to have conversations in ways that can help ensure that efforts to address issues around EDI are collaborative. Navigating these issues can sometimes be difficult but where dialogue is respectful and trust is established, there can be constructive and positive dialogue.

It is important that people have the opportunity to have a private discussion with another group member without the fear that the personal information they have disclosed will be shared outside of a trusted space. Where people wish this, it is also important to make provision, for example through a questionnaire, for anonymous feedback on experiences of equality and inclusion.

Further pointers can be found at: [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteering | NCVO](#)

iii) Awareness raising and training

Some local inter faith organisations provide training which is designed to help staff in other organisations such as statutory agencies and local companies learn more, in the context of EDI, about the beliefs and practices of different faith communities and sometimes also of those of non-religious beliefs. They usually charge to do that.

Inter faith organisations themselves may also run public events to highlight and educate about a particular dimension of diversity and inclusion awareness or racial justice.

Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M)

FN4M runs a course twice a year, at present, called 'Faith in Black Lives Matter'. Held with the One Spirit Interfaith Foundation and originally supported by a National Lottery's Awards for All grant, this is an online anti-racism and racism awareness course which is designed to create an understanding of what racial justice means for people of faith. It aims to show how people of faith can practise being anti-racist and how communities and their members can connect and support each other better. Participants are invited to reflect and pray, to listen to 'human story' books; and to share thoughts and to work on healing and change. The course is a development from a broader Faith in Black Lives Matter project set up after the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

WHY BLACK LIVES MATTER COURSE

A project of Faith in Black Lives Matter

Racial Justice...

What does it mean for people of faith and how do we practise being anti-racist? Was the brutal murder of George Floyd a moment in history like so many deaths of black folk or was it the start of a movement of people?

Come and explore with us why Black lives matter.

This four week course is an exploration of how we are vital to creating a world in which ALL people really do matter.

These workshops will be led by OneSpirit interfaith ministers Revs Malaika and Sue Cockerill, who will share their journey of the last 18 months with FN4M's project Faith in Black Lives Matter.

Participants will have access to an online platform where preparation and reflection materials will be provided before and after each webinar.

In these sessions, there will be an opportunity for reflection and prayer, to listen to human story books, group discussion to bring forward your thoughts, and ultimately working with healing and change and integrating anti-racism into ministry.

Course Dates:
 Tuesday 21st February 2023, 7:30-9:00pm
 Tuesday 28th February 2023, 7:30-9:00pm
 Tuesday 7th March 2023, 7:30-9:00pm
 Tuesday 14th March 2023, 7:30-9:30pm (2 hours)

CLICK HERE TO BOOK



Religious texts of many faiths are in their languages of creation and, for some communities, continue to form the basis of their daily religious practice.

Inter faith groups may have members and community contacts who speak/understand more than one language and whose first language may be one other than English or for whom another language is particularly important in their religious or cultural context. Consider what this may mean for your inter faith group, for example:

- Highlighting/celebrating the diversity of languages and importance of those
- Including discussions or events with original language religious texts – and also religious poetry – as a focus of discussion
- Creating or requesting, where appropriate, translations of texts
- In particular instances, where needed, arranging for interpretation (for example if a speaker is invited who requests that)

Building Bridges Pendle

Building Bridges Pendle organised a 'Talking Lounge' as part of their Talking Society Campaign in celebration of International Mother Language Day. This encouraged local people to share the language they had grown up speaking as well as their life story.

#TALKING SOCIETY

deee ALOHA yo SHALOM
HELLO GODDAG
 SE HOLA HALO XIN namaste
 DZIEK 17 CIAO SA
 NA Bonjour KIM

Tuesday 21st Feb
11.00am - 12.00pm

International Mother Language Day

Talking Society is a proactive campaign bringing local people together to take local action.

Discussing important issues and providing a safe space where positive conversation can take place and could make a difference in your area.

NELSON LIBRARY, MARKET SQUARE, BB9 7PU

Join us for the 'Talking Lounge' to celebrate International Mother Language Day. Come and share your mother language and story with us as we talk all things language, accent and dialect related.

For more info contact Shabaz on: 07938982546
 shabaz@buildingbridgespendle.org.uk

Logos: Building Bridges, Lancashire County Council

Whilst not a protected characteristic, language is an important part of identity and important to people's sense of cultural kinship. Affirming in a positive way the diversity of languages that may exist in your local communities can help create a bridge of understanding and respect.

x.com/FN4M/status/1625184545006927897

www.facebook.com/buildingbridgespendle/posts/pfbid026EwMxqze2T5hCNziyYeURaDnNH81sWAG2xmsd7Pe3vdSebXARew8eEL Lbb8V5EH



Bristol Multi-Faith Forum (BMFF) and NHS VitaMinds at outreach event

3) Partnership working

Working in partnership with other bodies can add value to local groups' work and bring great opportunities to effect change.

Local inter faith organisations often partner with other bodies on particular events.

It can also be good to work with other bodies on particular campaigns and longer term programmes where these fit with a local inter faith organisation's aims.

Local inter faith organisations also work in partnership with other local voluntary bodies or statutory agencies on particular projects or longer-term programmes.

For many local inter faith and multi faith bodies, an important dimension of their work is working with local authorities on events such as civic services and giving input on areas such as local authority service delivery (usually alongside local faith groups).

a) Some principles and practicalities of partnership

It is important that the basis for partnership is worked through carefully. NCVO provides helpful guidelines for thinking this through: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/running-a-charity/collaboration/about-collaborative-working/#/

Consider factors such as:

- Benefits versus risks and other potential disadvantages

- Responsibilities - who will be responsible for each aspect?
- Costs - how will any costs be split between the bodies?
- Ethos and values – do the different bodies share those?

Interfaith Wolverhampton

Interfaith Wolverhampton partnered with the Ethnic Minority Council and Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership to deliver the Faith and Community Connected Initiative. This was designed to provide support and encouragement to faith communities in their work on mental health support in the Wolverhampton area and to gather and share experiences about what works and why.

The project holders commented: 'Together we have developed a network of faith group in Wolverhampton and beyond, as well as upskilling and capacity-initiatives on the ground. Across the city and place-based areas faith leaders, community champions and community groups have provided community support ... especially for those who were socially isolated and needed support.'

Funding for this 2022–23 project of £90,000 came through the Faith New Deal Pilot fund of the Department for levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which focused on the continuing role of faith groups in supporting communities.



Project Celebration Awards. Photo: Wolverhampton Equality and Diversity Partnership

An example of ongoing partnership work by a multi faith forum with its local police force can be seen above.

Brent Multi-Faith Forum – working in partnership with its local police force

Brent Multi-Faith Forum works with its local police force to ensure that the relationship between the police and Brent’s faith groups is one built on a sense of mutual respect and understanding. It does this through three types of events. The first of these is its monthly liaison meeting with local police, where representatives of the police and faith groups in Brent get a chance to voice concerns, discuss recent or upcoming situations and events, and ways in which the police and faith groups can come together to effectively tackle societal ills. The second type of event is faith literacy seminars, in which members of the local police gather to deepen their understanding of the communities which they police.

Thirdly, BMFF has piloted and successfully hosted four Faith Links sessions, an innovative new template for a community safety event, in which community leaders gather and participate in roundtable discussions with local police on the ways to improve community safety, and in the process provide community-driven solutions while also strengthening ties within the different facets of the community. Faith Links sessions are hosted by faith venues and rotate around different local wards. The most recent Faith Links roundtable was held at the Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in Kingsbury to discuss community safety. Discussions focussed on improving the safety of young people, women and girls and on responding to pressures experienced by young people in the local community. It was attended by people from across the local area, including representatives from faith groups, Young Brent Foundation, Positive Spaces and Brent Council. Insights from the discussion will help inform future initiatives by the Metropolitan Police.

b) ‘Faith covenants’

In a number of areas, local inter faith bodies have supported faith communities in developing a ‘covenant’ framework with the local authority for mutually beneficial engagement.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society developed the Faith Covenant framework to address the issue that faith groups have a great deal to offer as providers and advocates of communities, but that some of their potential was being unnecessarily overlooked. They were assisted in that by FaithAction, which provides the secretariat for the APPG.

The Covenant was officially launched in 2014. Since that time a number of other local authorities and faith communities in their areas have adopted Covenants,

including: Barnet, Basildon, Birmingham, Blackpool, Braintree, Brent, Brentwood, Brighton and Hove, Calderdale, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Coventry, Dundee, Epping Forest, Essex, Harlow, Hertfordshire, Leeds, Maldon, Northamptonshire, Preston, Rochford, Sandwell, Solihull, Southampton, Uttlesford, Walsall, Welwyn Hatfield, West Midlands Combined Authority and Wolverhampton.

The Faith Covenant is not a formal or legally-binding commitment, but a set of co-designed principles to facilitate relationship. Local authorities and faith communities can work out a local version of the commitments according to the priorities of that locality. Underpinning any Covenant are principles that guide engagement, aiming to combat mistrust



Southampton Council of Faiths and Southampton Council at Faith Covenant signing

and promote open, practical working which helps to raise the voices of faith communities.

Examples of these draft principles, as outlined by FaithAction, are:

- Faith communities are free to practise their beliefs and religious observances without restriction, and to raise their voice in public debate and to be respected, within the framework of UK law.
- Public services and faith-based social action should respect service users from all backgrounds, with no discrimination on the grounds of religion, gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, mental capability or long-term condition.
- The voice, participation and solutions that faith communities bring are important, and consultation should enable them to be brought to bear for the benefit of the wider community.



Religious and civic leaders re-signing Birmingham Faith Covenant in 2022. Photo: Birmingham City Council

- Organisations and services are stronger for drawing on diverse sources of funding; monopolies of funding, action and participation are damaging.

If a local inter faith organisation is interested in working with faith communities and its local authority on developing a Covenant, contact the local authority and FaithAction at info@faithaction.net for more information.

The Faith Covenant entails the following commitments:

Preston City Council *commits* to welcome the involvement of faith groups in shaping and delivering services and social action on an equal basis with other groups.

In addition, Preston City Council commits to:

- Building relationships and trust with faith groups on common agendas.
- Adopting strategies for the engagement of faith communities in consultation exercises.
- Encouraging faith groups and their members to be involved in the reshaping and redesign of local services.
- Establishing clear guidelines for partnership and identifying sources of potential funding.
- Sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and Preston City Council.
- Invite Faith Groups to take an active role in civic events to reflect the diversity of the city.
- Faith-based organisations who sign up to this Covenant commit to work actively with Preston City Council in the design and delivery of services to the public and their communities.

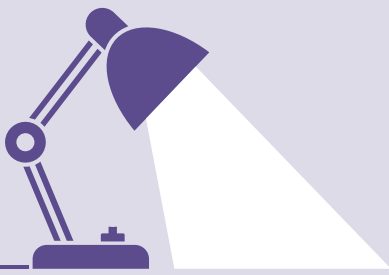
In addition, they commit to:

- Seeking opportunities to bring people together to serve and empower the community, particularly its poorest and most isolated members.
- Serving equally all local residents seeking to access the social action public services they offer.
- Ensuring good governance is in place, with excellence in child protection, support for vulnerable people, health and safety, accountability and transparency.
- Responding to consultations where appropriate.
- Sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the local authority.

RESPECT THOSE OF DIFFERING BELIEFS AND FAITH TRADITIONS AND WORK TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Example of a covenant document from a local authority

IFN's 2022 National Meeting Report www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/working-in-partnership-for-the-common-good-report-on-ifns-2022-national-meeting contains many examples of partnership work by other local groups such as Coventry Multi Faith Forum and Bolton Inter Faith Council.



Focus on Leicester Council of Faiths

In 1986, members from different faith communities in Leicester met at the town hall and formed a council of faiths. The work of Leicester Council of Faiths (LCOF) continues to the present day, evolving to respond to changing needs and pursuing its aims to advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the faith communities in Leicester and Leicestershire, and fostering inter faith relationships that build good relations between people.

The LCOF is a membership organisation, led by faith communities in Leicester and Leicestershire. There are currently 33 faith organisational members, a number of individual members, 60 faith leaders on a WhatsApp group network, and also a wider network of over 500 people from across Leicester and Leicestershire drawn from Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan and Sikh communities.

Through its activities and its approach, the LCOF seeks to build mutual understanding and friendships amongst and beyond communities of faith. It has a broad programme designed to encourage Leicester and Leicestershire's diverse communities to 'live, learn and work together today and in the future.' This includes encouragement to those wishing to start or strengthen local dialogues; seeking to assist where misunderstandings or tensions may have arisen; and provision of information and advice on inter faith issues. It also includes such activities as inter faith meetings, roundtable discussions, solidarity gatherings, charity days, an annual food festival and supporting inter faith iftars.

The LCOF also works with other groups and organisations who share its values of 'tolerance, mutual respect, community cohesion and a world-embracing vision.' It has worked in partnership with secular agencies on a wide range of health and education projects, such as a work commissioned by Leicestershire County Council to coordinate faith visits for its Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Team. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it worked with 30+



Leicester Council of Faiths members

faith groups to produce videos in 15 different languages to encourage vaccine take up and address hesitancy. It also worked towards those same goals through delivery of a Faith Leaders Vaccination Project involving 100+ faith leaders, clergy and volunteers who got vaccinated. It describes the grassroots connectivity and strategic engagement as helping it play a pro-active role to achieve its aims.

Each year the LCOF takes an active part in Remembrance Sunday commemorations. For example, in 2022, its current Chair (who is from the Muslim community): attended the Leicester City Service of Remembrance, with local faith representatives, to lay a wreath on behalf of all the city and county faiths; laid a wreath on behalf of all faith communities at the African-Caribbean War memorial; and also laid a wreath at the recently unveiled Sikh Troops War memorial, located in Victoria Park. The LCOF is also a founding partner of Leicester's Holocaust Memorial Day Committee and plays an active part in national Days and Weeks such as Hate Crime Awareness Week and Inter Faith Week.

LCOF is a registered charity. It currently has a Board of 12 Trustees, who represent the Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Jewish, Jain, Christian and Sikh faiths. It is supported at the present time by a part-time Manager, who works 15 hours a week. It seeks to fund its work through grants and commissions.

www.lcof.org.uk

Chapter 8: Developing a successful programme

A well-structured, varied and lively programme maintains the interest of members and encourages the involvement of new people. This chapter explores a range of different types of activities held by local inter faith bodies.

1) Learning and awareness raising

All local inter faith organisations provide important opportunities for their members and the wider public to learn more about different faiths and beliefs, thus deepening religious literacy. These are of many kinds such as: visits to places of worship of different faiths; talks and discussions, learning through longer-term dialogues, exhibitions and ‘faith fairs’ work with schools and SACRES; and production of resources.

a) Visiting places of worship

Local inter faith organisations often arrange visits to particular local places of worship to learn more about the faith in question. These may be open door days, one-off visits, part of a faith trail or stops on a ‘multi faith pilgrimage’ or walk.

i) Open door events

Open door events are where places of worship open for special visits, providing tours and special talks.

Visits with a chance to learn about different communities’ acts of worship

Bromley Three Faiths Group holds an annual ‘Invitation Weekend’ of open door events. Most recently, members and guests were invited to visit, in person or online, acts of worship at Bromley Reform Synagogue, St John’s Church and the Al-Emaan Centre. Each faith leader from the respective place of worship explained the significance of their religious practices. The idea is to foster a greater understanding of the diversity of religion in Bromley and to deepen inter community relationships which are among the key aims of the Group.

bromley3faithsgroup.org/

Celebration and learning – Bristol’s Diverse Open Doors Open Days

Bristol Multi Faith Forum arranges annual Diverse Doors Open Days, taking in a number of different places of worship. These celebrate the religious diversity of



Bristol and give people a chance to learn about the religious traditions practised in Bristol and to experience each other’s faiths communities. BMFF’s chair comments: “The beauty of the Diverse Doors open days is that it’s more than just visiting a place of worship. People talk about faith and life, they share food and customs and ask questions.”

The pattern of visits varies each year and BMFF arranges minibuses to transport people around the venues. The Days usually have a theme. In 2022, the theme was Spirituality and Mental Wellbeing. BMFF partnered with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. The visits were to ‘a Buddhist shrine, a Greek Orthodox church, a Black Christian church, a mosque, a gurdwara, a synagogue, a Hindu temple, and a Baha’i centre’. Participants were invited to engage in a discussion about the theme at each location.

bristolmultifaithforum.org.uk/category/un-categorised/news/



ii) Faith trails

Some local inter faith groups have developed 'faith trails' or 'faith walks'. As part of the trail, visitors may be invited for a tour and a short talk, to witness a service, prayer or ceremony, or simply to look around. Some are one-off trails, as in the example below from Smethwick Faithful Friends Forum. Others are regular trails with a map and guide, which enable visitors to go individually or as groups to visit different places of worship.

An example of detailed guidance about visiting places of worship can be seen at: [Visiting Places of Worship \(rsresources.org.uk\)](http://rsresources.org.uk)

Faithful Friends Smethwick Faith Trail

An example of guidelines from an Inter Faith Week faith trail in Smethwick organised by FFS with Near Neighbours is typical of guidance for faith trails:

"The faith trail is open for all to attend. We hope the visit will give participants an insight into what goes on in the faith-building we live alongside and get to learn about and meet the people that worship at these faith buildings.

The starting point for the Faith trail will be from outside Holy Trinity Church (Smethwick B67 7AH) at 10.15am.

- The Faith Trail will compromise visits to:
- Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Smethwick, B66 3AP at 10.30am
- Smethwick Baptist Church, Smethwick, B66 3BQ at 11.30am
- Usman Mosque, Smethwick, B66 4RG at 12.30pm

Guidelines for all attendees:

- The Faith Trail will be on foot, please take a look at the route if you feel the walk may be too long. In total between all the venues is 1.5km. We hope the walk will also allow participants to build friendships and have conversations.



A moment on the Faithful Friends Smethwick Faith Trail

- Clothing should be modest with legs and arms covered.
- When entering the Gurdwara, men and women will be required to cover their heads. A head scarf or any hat will suffice.

iii) Inter faith walks and pilgrimages

Some local inter faith organisations arrange annual multi-faith ‘pilgrimages’, ‘peace walks’ or other walks where people of different faiths and beliefs walk together, often visiting places of worship along the way. As well as enabling people to see the local places of worship and meet people of other faiths and beliefs, they are a very visible symbol of inter faith cooperation and friendship.

Watford Interfaith Association inter faith pilgrimage

Watford Interfaith Association holds an annual inter faith pilgrimage during which members, local faith communities and the public including children converse, share food and visit places of worship. Civic figures, such as the Mayor and local MP often join in.

The Pilgrimage has become an established event in Watford’s calendar. Taking place each year in national Inter Faith Week, it visits five or six places of worship close to Watford town centre. For the future, WIFA is considering the possibility of visits to other places of worship nearby but not in walking distance of the town centre.

The places of worship visited vary from year to year. A recent pilgrimage visited Watford and District Synagogue, Watford Central Mosque, St Mary’s C of E Parish Church, the Al-Zahra Centre, the Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church and the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha. Refreshments were provided along the way and the pilgrimage provided an opportunity for conversation and religious learning.



A Watford Interfaith Association pilgrimage

Medway Inter Faith Action Walk for Peace

Medway Inter Faith Action hold an annual inter faith walk which winds its way through the Medway towns of Gillingham, Chatham and Rochester. The walk brings faith and non-faith communities together to share community spirit regardless of faith, culture or race. During the walk there is usually a short service of peace, music and performances and a presentation at each place of worship on the shared concept of peace in each religion.

The walk is called a ‘peace walk’ and each year there is a there is a peace-related theme. The most recent walk – which took in the Chatham Naval Memorial, Byron Road Gurdwara, KMWA Mosque, Gillingham High St and St Mark’s Church – had the theme of ‘Walking for the Love of Peace’.

MIFA comments that the peace walk “provides opportunities for the participants to engage in friendly and positive conversations, learning about each other and from each other’s experiences. The event also promotes friendship and embraces positive interfaith and secular relations through a common cause – Peace.”



Mayor and walkers of different faiths on MIFA Walk for Peace

b) Talks and discussions

i) Themes and topics

Talks and discussions form a regular part of local inter faith organisations’ activities. Sometimes the focus is on particular aspects of faith and belief, for example, ‘why fasting is an important part of my faith tradition’ or ‘the golden rule in my faith/belief tradition’. At

other times it may be faith perspectives on a particular theme such as women and faith, homelessness or food poverty.

ii) External speakers

Many talks and dialogues are internal, just involving members of the group. Others involve invited speakers. Having an invited speaker or speakers can be an effective way both to secure an interesting input to a local inter faith organisation's activity and also help to contribute to wider debate about key issues and raise interest in the group's work, encouraging new people to get involved. An example of this is Calderdale Interfaith's event on 'Women, faith and leadership'.

iii) Annual lectures

An annual lecture can be a good way to give extra profile to a talk. An example of bodies which have such lectures is Edinburgh Interfaith Association.

Edinburgh Interfaith Association and the City's review of links to slavery and colonialism

In 2020 Edinburgh agreed to address historic racial injustice and stem modern day discrimination. As a consequence the independent review group was appointed to review the city's links to slavery and colonialism and to make recommendations to the council in how to respond to this. Among the 10 recommendations which were accepted was for the city to acknowledge its past role in sustaining slavery and colonialism and to issue an apology to those places and people who suffered. In Edinburgh Interfaith Association's 2023 Annual Inter Faith Lecture, Irene Mosoto shared some of the work, aims and objectives of the Commission and how individuals and faith communities can support that work.

c) Learning through longer-term dialogues

i) Ongoing group discussions

Some groups aim to build in smaller group discussions on a regular basis so that members can come to know each other better and explore issues in greater depth.

Altrincham Interfaith Group's 'Friendship Circles'

Friendship Circles are made up of about eight people of different faiths who meet in one another's homes, initially perhaps three or four times a year. The purpose of these meetings is to develop friendships between local people of different faiths, in a relaxed environment to gain insights into one another's traditions, and to discuss lifestyles and spiritual outlooks.

www.altrincham-interfaith.org.uk/about/



www.facebook.com/supriya.nagarajan.1/posts/pfbid02hV45pXW1LEsQcDRruPnTHAz1N8p65iYUAmqMznY669FkKkKscTweF7J54X4yysMjI

www.facebook.com/EIFA.page/posts/pfbid02V8dpd25TEB52CcYtimFHDcFQjmybe9ZiGyJ6Zy2ce6tM2Rg1bJ0VQjHjxgF3iI

ii) Inter Faith Buddies

A useful programme developed by the Inter Faith Network is the 'Inter Faith Buddies' scheme. This is designed to bring individuals together to engage in dialogue between two people of different faiths or of a particular faith and of a non-religious belief.

Participants:

- Keep in touch on a weekly basis for an agreed period (usually 3-6 weeks)
- Choose questions on which to share their thoughts and experiences
- if they wish, share at an in-person or online event, in an agreed way, some reflections on what they have gained from the experience

A number of groups, such as Shrewsbury Interfaith-Faith Forum and Watford Interfaith Association have used the scheme to develop religious-Humanist dialogues as part of an Inter Faith Week Inter Faith Buddies initiative of the Inter Faith Network and Humanists UK.

“The people taking part were members of the Muslim and Jewish Communities and Christian and Pagan Communities and someone with an interest in all faiths. Everyone said that they learned a lot and really appreciated the rare opportunity to ask personal questions in a safe environment. We also talked about what the most surprising thing was we had learned. I learned from my Buddy that whenever times were difficult, she would pray more and ask for more help. I found that really helpful to hear because although it makes sense to pray more, it is often more difficult during times of stress and strain. We all decided that the Inter-Faith Buddies Scheme was a good experience and it doesn't have to take a lot of time.”

dorkemryn.org.uk/feedback-from-interfaith-week-2020/

d) Exhibitions and inter faith awareness raising

Exhibitions and 'faith fairs', where different faith communities have display stalls with information about their beliefs and practices, are other popular ways of raising awareness about different faiths and beliefs. Inter Faith Week sees many of these each year,



Inter Faith Buddies Debby and Annabelle, from Surrey Faith Links, speak about their experiences.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHgNwAQsJyk

such as a 'Light for Leeds' event at Kirkstall Abbey arranged by Leeds Museums with local inter faith and faith organisations in the city. In Oldham, an annual 'Festival of Light' combines celebration with education.

Oldham Festival of light

Oldham Interfaith Forum holds an annual Festival of Light which celebrates Christmas (Christian), Deepawali (Hindu), Channukah (Jewish) and Mawlid an Nabi (Muslim). This both marks times special to local communities and increases understanding about their traditions. Recently, the Festival of Light was held at the Radclyffe School in Chadderton. The programme included short presentations from the representatives of local faith groups present alongside Indian dance performances, carols and nasheeds. The celebrations concluded with a buffet and an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.



oldhaminterfaith.org.uk/festival-of-light-2021/#&gid=1&pid=54

e) Working with schools and SACREs

i) Working with schools

Many local inter faith organisations help their local schools through providing opportunities for pupils to have presentations from people of different faiths and beliefs and conversations with them. They also sometimes assist with visits to places of worship and faith trails and provide resource such as videos.

SOME OF THE WAYS THAT LOCAL INTER FAITH BODIES WORK WITH SCHOOLS:

- Participating in, or leading, school assemblies
- Speaking to/with specific year groups, eg organising a 6th form conference
- Going as pairs or groups of people of different faiths to talk or take part in panels, demonstrating friendship and cooperation between faiths
- Facilitating visits and faith trails to places of worship
- Helping schools mark special Weeks and Days such as Inter Faith Week and Holocaust Memorial Day
- Holding competitions to encourage pupils to reflect on faith and inter faith issues through, eg, art and poetry
- Supporting the development of school inter faith groups or clubs or working with a school on an inter faith event

Bury Faith Forum

Bury Faith Forum organises 'Focus On Faith' events for Inter Faith Week every year. Children from primary and secondary schools are invited to Guardian Angels Parish Church in Bury. Pupils are given the opportunity to ask questions to Faith Ambassadors about their faith and belief traditions. In their most recent event, pupils took part in a Faith Arts and Crafts workshop where they made their own religious artefacts from a variety of different faiths. The events provide students with an interactive and fun way to learn more about the different faith and belief traditions in their communities.

Wellingborough Interfaith Group

Wellingborough Interfaith Group (WIFG) organises a variety of workshops and visits which it offers to local schools. These consist of interactive activities and talks by members of the group about the faith that they represent. The speakers includes representatives from the Baha'i, Christian, Hindu, Islamic and Sikh faiths. WIFG describes workshops as intended to promote harmony and respect by celebrating the similarities, but also the differences between different faith traditions. WIFG also produced an inter faith film which they use in primary schools, funded through a grant from Northamptonshire Community Foundation.



School Workshops team visit to Year 6 at All Saints CEVA School and Nursery Wellingborough

ii) Working with SACREs

In England and Wales, Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) play an important role in ensuring the availability of multi-faith RE – particularly in relation to the Locally Agreed Syllabus. SACREs advise local authorities on religious education in the community and voluntary controlled schools; and collective worship in community schools which are maintained by the local authority. SACREs are also responsible for ensuring that pupils in the local authority's maintained schools receive their statutory entitlement in RE, of the highest possible quality. SACREs help shape the Local Agreed Syllabus which determines the pattern of RE in local schools. They also carry out some other activities to assist with the development of RE in schools and these are likely to include liaison with local faith communities. The

IFN website holds helpful information on [Understanding SACREs](#).

Many local groups in England and Wales work closely with their SACREs. Brent Multi Faith Forum, for example, includes among its aims “To liaise with the local SACRE and promote understanding and common values of world religions and religious communities in schools.”

Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

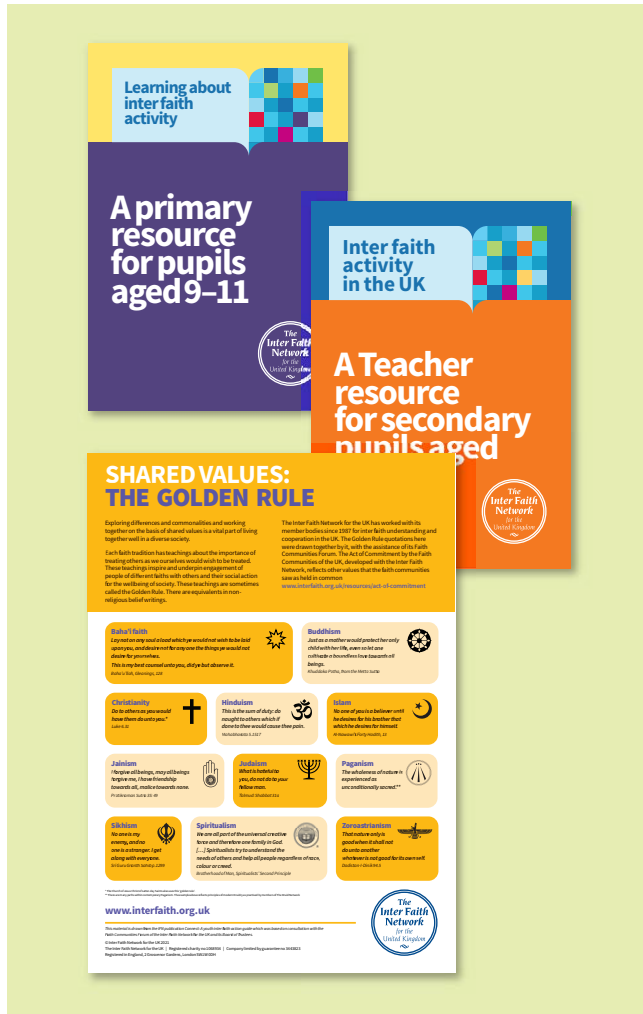
Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group organises a school initiative called ‘Whisper’. It is sponsored by the United Reform Church, Herts County SACRE and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. Schools are provided with trained speakers from multiple faiths who tell children about their faith tradition. This is used to supplement the broader RE curriculum in the area. Visitors answer children’s questions, give presentations about their faith, tell stories from scriptures and explain artefacts and festivals relevant to their religion. These events help the students to learn from an ‘authentic person of faith’ about the diverse religious traditions in the area.’

www.facebook.com/whisperforschools/photos/a.1284708884891935/3419999141362888/



A Welwyn Hatfield Whisper Interfaith for Schools visit

Some IFN teacher resources for primary and secondary schools designed to help increase pupils’ understanding of, and skills for, inter faith encounter,

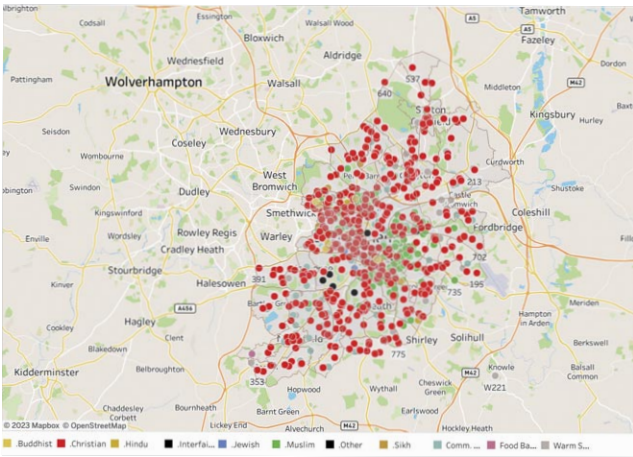


dialogue and action can be seen at [Schools - Resources - The Inter Faith Network \(IFN\)](#).

f) Creating information resources

Local inter faith organisations produce a range of different kinds of resources to help people learn more about different faith and beliefs and about their local places of worship. This includes:

- General overviews of the faiths lived and practised in an area; such as ‘[Faith Lives: An Information Pack describing Life and Belief in the City of Wolverhampton](#)’; and website information about the different faiths such as on the websites of [Nottingham Inter Faith Council](#) interfaithnottingham.org.uk/, [Norwich InterFaith Link](#) norwichinterfaithlink.wordpress.com/local-faith-communities/ and [Warwick District Faiths Forum](#) www.wdfaihsforum.org.uk/introduction-faiths/
- Online maps of places of worship in an area such as this one produced by Birmingham Council of Faiths



Footsteps programme
footstepsbcf.org.uk/birmingham-faith-community-map/

- Online directories of local places of worship and faith organisations such as those of Ipswich Faith and Community Forum www.ipswichfaithandcommunityforum.org.uk/index.php/faith-centres and Northampton Inter Faith Forum www.niff.org.uk/directory/

- Calendars giving details and dates of festivals of different faiths, such as that produced by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Also social media posts explaining more about particular festivals, such as a series of video interviews with members of different faiths about their festivals, produced by Lancashire Forum of Faiths:



“Here Amy explains the origins of Jewish festival of Hannukah,

sometimes known as the festival of lights - the succesful revolt against the despot Antiochus, and the miracle of the vial of oil which burned for 8 days - and how it is celebrated today.”

facebook.com/LancsFaiths/videos/5348370028527315

- Collections of prayers and readings, such as Devon Faith and Belief Forum’s Universal Peace Prayers devonfaiths.org.uk/resources/

Brighton & Hove Interfaith Contact Group (BHIFCG) Angels project

BHIFCG was inspired to hold a city-wide community competition event after discussing angels in different faith traditions. The local library, museum and schools became involved. The competition invited the Brighton-wide community to create an angel, either an image form or a piece of writing, to represent Brighton and Hove in all its diversity.

The Museum and Gallery held an ‘Angel Day’ with singing workshops, live music, Brighton and Hove’s Interfaith Choir, poetry, story-telling and arts and crafts activities alongside an angel trail of exhibits throughout the museum. The local library displayed art work and held a poetry workshop with poet, Dean Atta. A local school became involved. The RE teacher commented that the children had been excited about the project and finding out about shared knowledge of angels and opening dialogue with each other about their faith communities. “The project made the children think about who they [were] sitting next to”, commented the Mayor of Brighton and Hove, who presented the awards to the winners of the competition.

“People are nervous about talking direct spiritual topics but when it’s personified through angels it becomes easier to talk about and easier to see similarities between angels in your lives and the angels in others” – MP who was present at the interfaith service

A short video of the community competition can be seen [here](#).



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMdlP6Ckzxc

g) Special projects

Sometimes local inter faith organisations undertake cultural and educational projects which bring together contributors of different backgrounds to encourage learning about different faiths and to foster inter faith understanding and good relations. An example is Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group's 'Angel project', described on the preceding page.

h) Awareness raising about particular communities and issues

Some local inter faith organisations provide training which is designed to help staff in other organisations such as statutory agencies and local companies learn more about different faiths and beliefs.

Many local inter faith organisations also take the opportunity of special Months, Week and Days to raise awareness about different communities. For example:

- Black History Month, which each October promotes and celebrates Black contributions to British society and aims to foster an understanding of Black history in general.
- Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM) in November which aims to raise awareness of Islamophobia in society and also of the positive contributions of Muslims.
- South Asian Heritage Month, 18 July to 17 August, which commemorates, marks and celebrates South Asian cultures, histories and communities.
- Inter Faith Week, in November, is used by most local inter faith bodies as a high profile platform for raising awareness and promoting greater understanding about different faiths and beliefs.



A gathering of chairs from a number of London inter faith bodies in Inter Faith Week, arranged by Harrow Interfaith

x.com/IFWeek/status/1724762705251156433



ESNEFT Chaplains
@ESNEFTChaplains

Everyone is welcome to join us today (Monday 13th November) at 1.30pm in Ipswich Hospital Chapel to hear a member of our local Hindu community talking about Hinduism, Diwali & the needs of Hindu patients
[@Team_ESNEFT](#) [@ESNEFT](#) 🙏 #InterFaithWeek



6:33 AM · Nov 13, 2023 · 123 Views

x.com/ESNEFTChaplains/status/1723952240400961545



North Wales Interfaith
@NW_Interfaith

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Finding Agreement event - the discussion was full of amazing ideas and insights. Thank you to the Acton Community Resource Centre for having us, and to Maesgwyn Hall for a fantastic buffet dinner!

Photo: [@GezzaPerry](#)

#InterFaithWeek



x.com/NW_interfaith/status/1726007489282343084

2) Social action and social issues

At the heart of all faith traditions are values which inspire service to others and commitment to working for a just and compassionate society. This section gives some examples of local inter faith organisation activities with a focus on social issues.

a) Health and wellbeing

Faith communities play an important role in supporting health and wellbeing. Local inter faith organisations add value to that by bringing them together to share learning and amplify the work of health care bodies and programmes.

 **Warwick District Faiths Forum**
@ForumWarwick

A few of our stalls today #Wellbeing @arccic @alzheimerssoc @SWWMind #WomenSteppingOut



 **Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum**
@THInterFaith

Bishop of London @bishopSarahM talking about health disparities and working with #faith and government and how #TowerHamlets partners



Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum – supporting health in the community

As part of its work, Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum holds events to highlight the role that faith communities can play in community health and wellbeing. These have looked at areas such as mental health needs, bereavement and social prescribing.

It has also partnered with FaithAction on a project looking at how faith settings support the health needs of their communities. This involves supporting eight local faith settings and faith-based organisations to deliver health focused projects from activities for young people to healthy eating guidance, fitness sessions and blood pressure checks.

Local inter faith bodies also work on specific health issues. Some work with campaigns related to particular health needs and conditions, such as cancer, blood and organ donation, mental health and dementia.



Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship's Women's Group handmade forgetmenots for an installation at Leeds City Museum to raise awareness of dementia

x.com/ForumWarwick/status/1713108722581479703

x.com/THInterFaith/status/159258671617590272

concord-leeds.org.uk/2%20selection.JPG

Mindfulness and mental health – an example from Aberdeen

Aberdeen Interfaith and the Varapunya Meditation Centre have for a number of years held an annual ‘Interfaith Mindfulness Day’ at the Centre. The theme for the reflection for each year differs, usually following the annual theme that the Scottish Government announces for the year’s Mental Health Awareness Week.

There are often representatives from many different faiths attending including: Baha’i, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhists, Church of Scotland, Hindus, Humanists, Jews, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Muslims, Pagans, Quakers, and Unitarians. Normally, the day starts with an introduction to walking meditation through the community woodland at Varapunya. The mindful walk is meant to foster a closer connection to nature and ourselves. It is a skill to be in the moment rather than in the thoughts. After the walk through the woodland everyone shares stories on the theme as individuals on a personal level and from their respective faiths.



Aberdeen Interfaith and Varapunya Meditation Centre Mindfulness event

A number of local inter faith groups, such as Crawley Inter Faith Network, also help their local hospitals and hospices through volunteering and chaplaincy support and partnering on activities designed to increase local communities’ awareness of their services.



x.com/StCHospice/status/1460286369515905031

b) Responding to need

Some local inter faith organisations provide support to those who are in particular need of that for reasons such as new arrival to the UK, homelessness and poverty.

i) Asylum seekers and refugees

Many local inter faith organisations seek to help those in their area who are seeking sanctuary, sometimes working with bodies such as City of Sanctuary, Citizens UK and refugee bodies on this.



A welcome being given to asylum seekers at the town's historic Rose and Crown hotel by consortium of Wisbech Interfaith, with Quakers, Anglicans, the local trades council and others.

www.rcdea.org.uk/warm-welcome-given-to-asylum-seekers-in-wisbech

Interfaith Glasgow's 'Weekend Club'

Inter Faith Glasgow established its 'Weekend Club' as an inter faith response to the social isolation experienced by asylum seekers, new migrants and refugees as they arrive in Glasgow. The project aims to help newcomers who often face financial, linguistic and mental health-based difficulties and to build integration, solidarity and a sense of common purpose amongst 'New Scots'.

A team of volunteers from a range of faith and belief communities organise the free monthly events. These events are sometimes held in collaboration with other organisations and faith communities and designed to help the participants strengthen their social connections, learn about Glasgow and Scotland and improve their English skills. The project offers reimbursement for the travel and digital costs where necessary to ensure accessibility to as wide a range of people as possible.

Interfaith Glasgow comments: "The model of refugee integration the Weekend Club embodies is one which aids interfaith and intercultural integration at every stage in the process, from planning through to delivery, and promotes a vision of the UK as somewhere where diversity is valued and where people from different backgrounds can cooperate for the common good. As well as benefitting newcomers, this practical interfaith cooperative action benefits the receiving community in so far as it fosters constructive contact – and fellow-feeling – with refugees and new migrants and a sense of solidarity and common purpose with people from other backgrounds."

Further information at:
interfaithglasgow.org/weekend-club/



Glasgow Weekend Club Photo: Interfaith Glasgow

ii) Volunteering to support those facing homelessness and other challenges



Newmarket Looking for Change launch

Looking for Change alternative giving

Newmarket InterFaith Forum teamed up with the Bury drop-in Centre to launch a Looking for Change alternative giving campaign in Newmarket to encourage people to help homeless people by text or online donations.

Inter faith volunteering – an example from Northampton

Northampton Inter Faith Forum (NIFF) members volunteer regularly at the city’s Hope Centre which works with people facing problems of disadvantage and marginalisation, including hardship, homelessness, addiction and mental health.

“Another busy day for NIFF members volunteering at the local Hope Centre serving hot meals. A big thank you to all volunteers and Abdul Ali for providing the hot food. Today’s menu was vegetable samosas, rice and vegetable curry which was enjoyed by all.”



Northampton Inter Faith Forum volunteers at Hope Centre

iii) Helping provide food and other necessities

Members of a number of local groups help collect for food banks and assist at those and also help with other drives for items such as sanitary products.



Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Council Period Poverty awareness raising

c) Environmental action

Care for the planet and concern about climate change have led to growing engagement by local inter faith bodies with environmental social action activities. For example, Inter Faith Week has seen many using the Week to hold activities such as tree and bulb plantings; nature walks; practical conservation tasks including chopping down invasive trees, scything meadows and building bat boxes; and conferences, talks and workshops on climate change.

Given the popularity of environmentally focused local inter faith activities, this guide contains an extended section with examples of these and programme ideas.

Faith for the Climate faithfortheclimate.org.uk/ is a helpful resource for inter faith organisations including climate-focused activities in their programmes.

BCF Footsteps - Faiths for a Low Carbon Future

Footsteps brings together faith groups in Birmingham to respond to the challenge of moving to the low carbon future agreed in Paris.

'Footsteps' was formed just before the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) in 2015. An inter faith Walk of Witness and Gathering took place in the centre of Birmingham. The Birmingham faith leaders and over 300 people endorsed the 'Lambeth Declaration'. Their signed document was presented to the Government by the local MP. In 2019 It encouraged Birmingham faith leaders and communities to join young people and others to call on Birmingham to declare a climate emergency. Footsteps represented the faith communities on the Task Force which developed an action plan for Birmingham to achieve Net Zero by 2030.

Early on Footsteps became a project of Birmingham Council Faiths. Through its work it seeks to show how valuing the environment and protecting the planet are an integral part of faith, not an optional extra. Its current work themes are:

- supporting local faith communities
- saving energy in faith buildings
- working with younger people
- promoting interfaith events and activities

Footsteps holds an annual conference, 'Tread Lightly' in the national Inter Faith Week in a different place of worship each year. Just a few of its other activities have been: a 'plastic free iftar' during Ramadan; a local summer walk for all ages, highlighting green projects and opportunities; an Energy Champions project (with West Midlands Quakers); and 'Small Footsteps' week-a summer programme for young people aged 8 – 14.

See Footsteps website for details of activities and resources. footstepsbcf.org.uk/



Footsteps stall at Friends of Highgate Green Spaces community day

i) Planting trees and bulbs

Inter faith planting of trees and bulbs is a popular activity.

Harrow Interfaith – Planting for Peace

Harrow Interfaith, OneJAIN, Harrow Council, Friends of Kenton Rec and Trees for Cities worked together to plant 1000 trees and flowering bulbs at Kenton Recreation Ground in Harrow to create an 'Ahimsa Peace Forest'. This Peace Forest is intended to be a tranquil place of reflection for all to enjoy, as well as a gathering place for inter faith groups to mark important occasions. This was part of a mass tree planting arranged by OneJAIN under the 'Planting for Peace' environmental initiatives launched by Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur UK to mark national Inter Faith Week and the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.



Harrow Interfaith members at tree planting

SOME IDEAS FOR LOCAL INTER FAITH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Local inter faith organisations can have a positive environmental impact both through how they run their regular meetings and also through arranging special meetings and practical projects.

Coming together to promote and actively get involved in environmental social action is a great way to promote shared values between faiths and can leave a lasting symbol of inter faith cooperation in your area.

Practical environmental activities can also be enjoyed across different generations and, can provide an opportunity to spend some quality time with your friends and neighbours of all faiths and none, while also taking a positive action in greening your local environment.

Some ideas for local inter faith environmental actions

- Think about how you can make your meetings more sustainable by eliminating the use of single-use plastic and using recycled/ recyclable materials
- Think about how you can make the venues for your inter faith meetings and events as environmentally friendly as possible – does the venue require a lot of heating and energy? Are people who come to meetings able to travel to the venues by public transport or on foot?
- Find out ways to reduce your carbon footprint
- Get in touch with the local authority or Wildlife Trust to see how you can get involved with conservation work in the area
- Consider having a ‘green action’ section in your organisation’s newsletter or on social media to share tips on living sustainably or different teachings on the environment from different religions
- Arrange or take part in tree, bulb and other plantings
- Do an inter faith litter pick
- Share resources and readings on faith-based or inter faith environmental action within your organisation

A few words about planting trees

Because tree planting projects are often seen as ‘one-off’ events, they are often the most popular type of greenspace climate action. But just a few important things to point out.

- You can’t just plant trees and leave them. Trees need all sorts of looking after while they get established; probably 2–3 years.
- It is best not to plant in summer. Trees need lots of watering then which isn’t good ‘climate practice’. If looking for a summer activity, raise funds for tree planting and plan an event for the autumn.
- Smaller trees often make more sense. For example, if you’re planting oaks, buy small ones. They’re much cheaper and will grow quickly with far less resource demands than larger plants. If you’re just planting one big specimen somewhere, then that’s different.
- Get expert advice. Trees need to be there for a long time so they must be right, so get expert advice on what species to choose in your situation.

This link is useful: www.rhs.org.uk/advice/how-to-plant-a-tree

From IFN National Meeting presentation by John Marder, Network of Buddhist Organisations and horticulturalist

Wakefield Inter Faith Network – a planting story

Wakefield Inter Faith Network has, across a number of years, been planting native trees in a local park. It does this with Wakefield Tree Wardens, Wakefield District Arboricultural officer and sometimes local school children, the Wakefield Inter Faith Network planted tree native trees in a local park. Gradually an ‘inter faith circle’ of trees is being planted, symbolising unity and growth and providing a point of interest and beauty for visitors to the park whilst encouraging biodiversity and supporting the habitat of the park’s wildlife.



Wakefield Interfaith Network tree planting

Solihull Faiths Forum – planting for remembrance

Solihull Faiths Forum partnered with Solihull Council to plant bulbs and wildflowers in Hope Coppice, a woodland planted in remembrance of those affected by Covid-19. The coppice is also part of the Solihull Council’s ‘Planting Our Future’ programme, providing space for peace and contemplation and supporting nature and biodiversity in the borough.



Solihull Faiths Forum members at Hope Coppice

ii) Gardens and park spaces

Some local inter faith organisations have helped create special inter faith gardens and areas in local parks. For example, Watford Inter Faith Association inter faith peace garden in Cassiobury Park, initiated with the endorsement of the Watford Faith communities and supported by the local council.



3) Youth inter faith activities

Local inter faith organisations engage with young people primarily through their schools work, which is covered earlier in this chapter. Some also work with youth organisations and other types of bodies such as sports clubs and also nearby universities and colleges to involve young people in their inter faith activities.

www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10156809997100493&set=gm.2802487516468665

www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=410615974039835&set=pcb.41061703733062

www.facebook.com/WatfordInterfaithAssociation/posts/pfbid02815ZM-TAVE7gUzJEBrGDrrdHmQmG2z2p6dVs3osN6LGb9KpJGfDsfWRaNP3EGk4l

linkedin.com/posts/dr-peter-rookes-77b24862_thank-you-to-everyone-who-took-part-in-our-activity-7172354825702096896-JHq3

a) Holding activities with youth organisations

Working with a youth organisation can help ensure that activities are age-appropriate and with safeguarding steps in place and with support. For example, Birmingham Council of Faiths runs, as noted on page 27, an annual Faith and Fun day in partnership with Birmingham Scouts and Girlguiding Birmingham.

b) Holding youth activities with other types of organisation

In some cases, local inter faith organisations have built a special relationship with other types of bodies such as local sports clubs.

Burnley Building Bridges and Burnley FC

Burnley Building Bridges is an official charity partner of Burnley FC and Burnley FC in the Community:

www.facebook.com/burnleyofficial/videos/816665286669150/

Together, they hold an annual inter faith football tournament. During a recent Inter Faith Week, Building Bridges Burnley and Burnley FC in the Community invited children from Barden Primary School, St John's School CE Cliviger, and Daneshouse FC to take part in the inter faith football tournament at the Leisure Box Brierfield. Pupils had the chance to get to know each other as well as to enjoy playing together. The children and their families were then given free tickets to see Burnley FC play at Turf Moor. The BBC featured the activity on the 'This Morning Live' television show shortly after the Week.

www.burnleyexpress.net/news/people/budding-burnley-footballers-feature-as-part-of-bbcs-world-cup-coverage-3952649

Faiths Forum for London has, similarly, partnered with Arsenal in the Community to enable opportunities for young people to both play football together and learn about each other's background.

Such kinds of collaborations take forward the aims of the different organisations involved enabling young people to take part in a sport they love; gain new skills; meet and get to know those of other faith backgrounds; and learn. They are most likely to work



Burnley FC in the Community and Building Bridges in Burnley tournament

facebook.com/photo/?fbid=516040947215547&set=pcb.516041767215465

where there are local inter faith organisation members who are passionate about a particular sport (or other activity) and willing to give time and energy to building a long term relationship of the type established in Burnley.

c) Engaging directly with young people

A number of local inter faith organisations have, at different times, established youth groups or youth councils or youth ambassador schemes. Ensuring continuity and longevity is a challenge - young people grow older and new connections need continually to be nurtured. It remains very worthwhile to establish such schemes even where they may only run for a few years. Each group of young people who become involved get a great opportunity to learn about other faiths; make friendships with those of different backgrounds; and develop skills for their future careers. They also bring fresh perspectives to the local inter faith group itself.

In thinking about establishing a youth group or forum, some important questions to explore are:

- Why do we want to set up a youth group or forum?
- How will we make contact with young people about this?
- How will we involve young people in its design and running?
- What do we hope the participants will gain?
- What will the local inter faith organisation gain?
- How will we ensure the group is suitably supported and resourced?
- Will the initiative need some part-time support to run?
- What plans for sustainability do we need to build in?

Involving young people in an initiative design and implementation at all stages is very important. Likewise, being open to hear their reflections on the wider work of the inter faith organisation. In some cases, youth initiatives have acted as seedbeds for future trustees or offices, for example, Barnet Multi Faith Forum's Youth Forum was the route through which one young person became very actively involved, subsequently becoming one of BMFF's Vice-Chairs for a period.

Barnet Multi Faith Forum's Youth Forum

In 2019, after planning and consultation, Barnet Multi Faith Forum launched a Youth Forum. The aim of this was to "create a safe space where young people can engage together in a dialogue of aspirations and concerns in order to build a strong and vibrant multi-faith culture in the borough". It set this up on the following basis:

- The BMFYF age group for its members should be from 15 years old to 25 years old, to truly encompass and represent all young people of a faith background in Barnet.
- There should be clarity that the empowerment and engagement should be representative of all faiths, abilities, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds in the borough.
- It will also be critical to balance the numbers of young people that may be studying, in apprentices, employment or not, or in care.
- Each faith youth group/ school / agency should nominate a designated staff lead / guardian and a link between the youth forum member and The BMFYF Youth Coordinator.
- The faith group lead will select up to three young people to represent their faith group/ community.
- The elected young person should commit to attending meetings and taking forward any agreed actions over the course of one year (term-time).
- The BMFYF aims to be youth-led, so that the young people are the driving force of the forum's direction, with support from the BMFYF

The Youth Forum was very active and carried out a number of activities. The pandemic brought a halt to in-person meeting and affected the longer term development of the group. However, a number of the young people carried on engagement through its WhatsApp and recently BMFF secured an Awards for All grant of £10,000 to get the Youth Forum rolling again. It has appointed a part-time youth coordinator (a university student) for 30 hours a month who is recontacting the borough's faith groups and faith leaders about young people to involve and will be assisting in getting the Youth Forum under way again.

d) Working with HE and FE institutions

Another route through which local inter faith organisations can interest students in their activities is linking with FE and HE institutions. These kind of links are often built and strengthened through engaging with chaplaincies: for example, Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum long established link with Blackburn College.

Joint activities, such as for Inter Faith Week, also help develop relationships that bring a local inter faith organisation's work to the attention of students. Cheltenham Interfaith, for example, has collaborated with the University of Gloucestershire and Cheltenham Borough Council across a number of years on Inter Faith Week events and activities.

e) Some useful resources

The Inter Faith Network's Connect: A Youth Inter Faith Action Guide www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/connect provides a number of useful resources.

The Faith and Belief Forum faithbeliefforum.org/ and the Feast thefeast.org.uk/ run programmes for young people to develop inter faith and intercultural understanding and skills and have a number of resources available on their websites.

A recently developed National Multi Faith Youth Centre National Multifaith Youth Centre (nmycentre.org) includes among its activities connecting students with faith and non-faith organisations and gives a local inter faith group example.

4) Women's inter faith activity

In 2023, IFN published Deep connections: women's local inter faith initiatives in the UK www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/deep-connections-womens-local-inter-faith-initiatives-in-the-uk

This explores many different kinds of local inter faith initiatives run by and for women. A number of these are part of local inter faith organisations. The report details the many ways that such initiatives, and also shorter term women's projects, can be developed as an important part of such organisations' overall work.

If considering developing a new programme strand of this kind, some questions that it may be helpful to consider include:

- What will be the purpose(s) of a women's group or forum?
- What might be the benefits to the women involved?
- How might the initiative strengthen the overall local inter faith organisation?
- How may the women's group or forum be drawn together and developed?
- What pattern of activity might help enable involvement from the widest range of women of different ages and backgrounds?
- How will the women's initiative relate to the overall local inter faith organisation?
- How may its activity be supported and resourced?



Women Growing Together, Oldham Interfaith meeting for a walk and a coffee in a local park

x.com/samrakazam/status/1425755521097912328

Calderdale Women's Interfaith Group

Calderdale Women's Interfaith Group (CWIG) began over 10 years ago. It is part of Calderdale Interfaith – a local inter faith organisation that has been going for over 20 years. The Women's Interfaith Group was started by a core group of women who wanted to meet more often, separately from the main group. CWIG aspires to identify and fulfil local community needs. Its purposes and activities include: arts and crafts, celebrating/marketing events such as International Women's Day, community cohesion, dialogue, education and mutual support. It sometimes partners with other organisations to do things such as an International Women's Day activity. The Group has Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and Quakers regularly involved and guest women speakers from Hindu, Jewish and Sikh faiths. It meets monthly on a weekday morning. A group of regular attendees meets for coffee mornings every fortnight in community spaces or a public space, with speakers addressing health issues, an inter faith topic, raising awareness of an issue, and with creative workshops. It is considering arranging evening and weekend events to attract a more diverse age group.

Calderdale Council provides some funding for the work of Calderdale Interfaith Group and the Women's Group has access to those funds. www.calderdaleinterfaith.co.uk www.facebook.com/CalderdaleInterfaith

As the IFN report notes,

“There are a wide range of reasons why women set up and take part in women's local inter faith initiatives, such as: making friends with women of different backgrounds; seeking understanding of other faiths and to raise awareness of their own; developing skills and confidence in areas such as public speaking and community leadership; helping develop and deepen bonds between local communities; artistic expression; working on social issues; and simple enjoyment of conversation and shared activities. In some cases, there is also a factor of finding a space that is more welcoming and 'safe' than contexts where women's voices may not be fully heard or where they may experience prejudice, constraint or

even misogyny. It is clear that there remains a need, in some contexts, to address community or other barriers to participation.

Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum (WAMCF) Women's Group

WAMCF was established over forty years ago to bring together various faiths in the Borough. Its Women's Group was created over ten years ago to allow women a chance to meet, to share stories and discuss issues concerning women of faith in a safe setting.

The group meets in community spaces and places of worship, usually bimonthly on weekday evenings, enabling those with daytime commitments to attend. Its meetings include regular speakers on shared concerns and arts and crafts activities, such as the creation of a wall hanging of 24 patchwork squares which reflect different faiths and is now on public display.

The group has received some project funding through a grant held by WAMCF.

www.wamcf.org/womens-group/



WAMCF Women's Group. Credit: Maidenhead Advertiser

tinyurl.com/y64uec44

A number of the groups have arts and crafts at the centre of their activity and produce, on a regular basis, beautiful works which also speak of the themes and social causes that matter to them. Where participants speak a number of different languages, there is the additional benefit that crafts activity can take place companionably without expectation of extended conversation and relationships can develop as the work takes place.

Even where language is shared, such activities can enable a more natural dialogue and interaction to develop, as can working together on social projects. What is striking across all the stories told by the women who have contributed to this project is the quality of deep connection: friendships forged,

Redbridge Faith Forum Women's Interfaith Group

Redbridge Faith Forum is a charity with trustees from all different faith groups in the London Borough of Redbridge. It established the Women's Interfaith Group in 2009 after a need was assessed between 2007 to 2009 following four public forums.

The Women's Interfaith Group is part of RFF. There are six faith groups involved. Its work has developed across the years into a broad and diverse programme. It is based around regular workshops with speakers on topics decided by the women from health to climate change and current affairs. The group's purposes include celebrating or marking events such as International Women's Day, community cohesion, dialogue, and mutual support. Its long term goals are to bring together women of different faiths in a safe and secure environment where they are able to share their beliefs and viewpoints about many issues with no fear of rejection or discrimination.

Benefits experienced by those taking part are described as including: broader impact on social initiatives; emotional support; increased understanding about different faith groups; increased feelings of trust; strengthened relationships between different faith groups; and feelings of community. It reports that, since it has been active, regular members have gained trust and confidence in sharing their beliefs which they know will be respected. The wider local inter faith organisation is described as also having benefitted in that women have gained confidence to join wider events and they recommend engagement with the Faith Forum to their faith group.

Women's events are held bi-monthly – usually held at different faith venues, with the group having a chance to tour the place of worship at the end of the session. The group is serviced by Redbridge Faith Forum. Faith venues let it use their premises and sometimes provide free refreshments.

Redbridgefaithforum.org/



experiences shared, and a sense of commonality and shared endeavour. This was highlighted in many of the responses which speak of the development of long-term, enduring friendships.”

Local inter faith organisations interested to set up a women’s initiative are encouraged to read the report. Its ‘Top tips’ section (pp 49-50) is a useful overview of some of the key considerations women who contributed think are useful to bear in mind.

5) Standing together in solidarity

As noted in Chapter 1, often at times of difficulty, faith communities reach out to each other to stand together.

In terms of planning a programme of work, this might include solidarity in connection with past atrocities, for example, organising and joining in events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day or Remembering Srebrenica.

There will also, sadly, be times when faith communities need to stand together in response to current events, for example by holding vigils of solidarity or issuing statements after terrorist attacks, or responding to local hate crime incidents, whether against people or places of worship.

Local inter faith organisations can play an important role in responding to tensions, hate incidents and hate crime. IFN’s guidance document ‘Looking after one another: the safety and security of our faith communities’ is a key resource for this www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/looking-after-one-another-the-safety-and-security-of-our-faith-



Build on and strengthen existing good inter faith relations

Joint responses to inter community tensions or attacks on community properties or individuals are most effective if they are built on an existing process of strengthening communications and building trust. It is important to:

- **Create strong and positive relationships** within and between faith communities, as well as the wider community.
- **Build long-term personal relationships** between leaders of our diverse faith communities.
- **Develop connections between congregations** of different local places of worship, providing opportunities for members to meet one another, to learn about their different faiths and to encourage personal friendships.
- **Encourage all members of our faith communities to engage** positively and respectfully with each other.



From: www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/looking-after-one-another-the-safety-and-security-of-our-faith-communities-2023

- **Ensure that local inter faith structures are strong**, have active involvement from senior figures of all the local faith communities and are adequately resourced and also encourage our members to be involved in their work.
- **Help develop and run programmes** to promote better understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs – and, in particular, between young people of different backgrounds.
- **Use opportunities like Inter Faith Week** and Mitzvah Day, Sadaqa Day and Sewa Day to highlight this engagement for the common good.
- **Provide training about how to respond to prejudice** and also how to report hate incidents – for example doing a joint training session with other local faith groups or organisations working with other protected groups.
- **Hold a meeting for members of local faith community organisations** to share their knowledge and experience of building security issues.
- **Establish regular meetings with police and local authorities** to keep relevant issues under review and develop partnerships for joint practical action.
- **Maintain awareness of, and act on, legal requirements** for security for places of worship, including against potential terrorist attacks.
- **Develop a communications strategy** – being clear about what we might want to say if problems arise and who might carry the messages both within and beyond the local faith communities (for example through co-ordinated sermons, social media, podcasts and local newspapers and radio).
- **Don't under-estimate your contribution** – our partners such as the emergency services may be stretched during times of tension. The help of faith communities could be vital.

communities-2023. It was developed and published by IFN in association with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; the Equality and Human Rights Commission; the Home Office; the Crown Prosecution Service; the National Police Chiefs' Council; and the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Looking After One Another contains guidance on responding jointly to attacks on places of worship; working for calm at times of tension; and working to build on and strengthen existing good inter faith relations. It contains material about how and where to report hate incidents, cyber-attacks, and actual or suspected terrorist activity; and where to find information on strengthening the security of buildings.

Tackling faith-related hatred and prejudice in different manifestations is also part of the work of many local inter faith bodies: whether this be antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti Hindu or Sikh or targeted at other faith groups whether intentionally or due to mistaken identify.

There can be times when solidarity feels elusive: when there are strongly felt different views on events in the UK or overseas. Even where local inter faith organisations have a strong history of mutual support, bonds can be tested. In such circumstances, it is helpful to find ways to retain some contact and remain in conversation so far as possible.

facebook.com/bathinterfaith/posts/pfbid0bRQf6oWHZgCLBE1BNMFtqyyFWBzew2PH9IEDn5ptVgAGqz5vE5ykRfhZszCuHhhl

Silent Vigil for Peace in our World


We would like to invite you to a 'Silent Vigil' to pause, reflect and stand in solidarity with for the parts of our world where there is conflict, injustice and unrest.

We would like to emphasise this is NOT a political rally but a gathering in unity, love, grace and compassion.

We will do this by gathering in Bath in 'Parade Gardens' in Bath on Sunday 19th November at 2.30-3pm. You are invited to bring with you an LED candle or a 'real' candle in a jar or lantern to ensure it stays alight (in spite of the weather).

There will be no speeches, address, readings or prayers – just a simple gathering in silence where we will wish each other and those around us peace in our preferred language. We will conclude with 'May Peace Prevail' and then leave in silence.

In Partnership with Bath & Wells Diocese, Bath Inter faith Group and The Ammerdown Centre



“...As well as responding through reporting hate incidents and raised security, it is vital that we stand together and respond in solidarity where people would seek to divide through inflammatory rhetoric or intimidation. Views on situations and actions in the UK and internationally may differ (indeed may differ profoundly, with people deeply affected by events); what cannot and must not waiver is our commitment as people of different faiths in the UK to maintaining a safe environment for our lives together and to sustaining and continuing to develop relationships of trust and respect.”
 From a statement by the Board of IFN issued during National Hate Crime Awareness Week, October 2023.

From: [Standing together against hate crime - News – The Inter Faith Network \(IFN\)](#)

“For 20 years a small group of volunteers have been bringing the two communities together. The aim is to build cultural and social connections. And the Israel-Gaza war has made the efforts of the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester all the more vital. "It's important not to import the conflict over here," says the forum's Muslim co-chair Mohammed Amin. "What's happening in Gaza is on a different scale to anything that's happened during the life of the forum and I'm extremely conscious of how much damage the conflict is doing to community relations over here." After the war began on October 7, the forum called on all 'to act responsibly and to support and protect each other against any form of hatred and provocation...’”

From: [‘Ignorance leads to intolerance’: The people bringing Manchester’s Muslims and Jews together - Manchester Evening New](#)

6) Prayer and services

Quite a number of local inter faith organisations include prayer as part of their meetings.

Silent prayer is very common – both at the beginning and end of meetings and also at gatherings such as vigils. Sometimes special prayers are created by or for the group, for example Exter Faith and Belief Forum’s

‘Universal prayers’. Or anthologies of readings such as *All in Good Faith*, by Marcus Braybrooke and Jean Potter, or those created by the late Brother Daniel Faivre of Westminster Interfaith are used.

A widely used approach is sequential offerings of prayers from members of different faiths to which others listen, but in which they do not actively participate. That approach is often taken where there is a concern that spoken joint prayers could lead some people to find themselves feeling that they are being expected to join in what they may see as worship of a divinity who is not fully as they understand the Divine. Also, non theists can be put into an awkward situation by assumptions that all religions acknowledge a Divine Being. Depending on how meditations are introduced, that can also be a relevant factor.

Holocaust Memorial Day or to particular civic or national occasions such as the Coronation. The shape and content of the order of service or programme will depend on a number of factors, including the planned pattern of participation of different faith and belief groups and also whether the venue is a place of worship – in which case there may be particular parameters (for example Canon Law in the case of the Church of England).



Some groups, such as Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief Network hold an annual inter faith service with a particular theme, with civic dignitaries in attendance.

There are increasingly requests to local inter faith organisations from local authorities and other types of organisation to assist on special services and even to provide the chaplaincy for the local mayor during their term of office. The services range from those for Remembrance events to those connected to

Sometimes local authorities or other bodies opt for an event which has readings and possibly sequential prayers but which is framed as something other than a service, for example a ‘Shared Act of Commitment’ or an ‘Observance’.

A useful resource is the Act of Commitment created by the faith communities of the UK with IFN for an official Millennium events which took place at the House of Lords at the start of the year 2000: Act of Commitment – Resources – The Inter Faith Network (IFN) The occasion had major significance as the first UK public multi faith expression of commitment to an inclusive society which recognises the contribution which all the faiths make to national life. Towards the end of it, leading faith community representatives invited the audience to join them in the Act of Commitment. The text of this, which has been used subsequently in many other events, sometimes with modification to make it specific to a particular town or city, is reproduced below.

A Shared Act of Commitment by the Faith Communities of the UK

Faith community representatives:

In a world scarred by the evils of war, racism, injustice and poverty, we offer this joint Act of Commitment as we look to our shared future.

All:

We commit ourselves, as people of many faiths, to work together for the common good, uniting to build a better society, grounded in values and ideals we share:

*community,
personal integrity,
a sense of right and wrong,
learning, wisdom and love of truth,
care and compassion,
justice and peace,
respect for one another,
for the earth and its creatures.*

We commit ourselves, in a spirit of friendship and co-operation, to work together alongside all who share our values and ideals, to help bring about a better world now and for generations to come.

Sometimes local inter faith organisations share prayers and reflections online. This was particularly the case during the pandemic.

CANDIFA also provides an example of reflections and readings gathering around a theme and connected to a particular context:

Local inter faith organisations also sometimes contribute prayers to particular events. For example, to a planting a tree by Ellesmere Primary pupils in the Shropshire cherry tree orchard of remembrance for the Holocaust, Nazi persecution, and genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia and Darfur, where poetry and prayer contributed by the South Shropshire Interfaith Forum newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2024/01/ellesmere-primary-school-plant-cherry-tree-remembrance-holocaust

Inter Faith Network for the UK
3 July 2020 · 🌐

A number of local inter faith organisations have, during the COVID19 pandemic, been sharing prayers and reflections. This example is from Candifa

Some other examples, from Cornwall Faith Forum - Dor Kemyn and Interfaith Contact Group of Brighton and Hove, can be seen at <https://dorkemyn.org.uk/weekly-thursday-noon-prayers.../> and <https://interfaithcontactgroup.com/.../words-of-connection/>



CANDIFA
CANTERBURY & DISTRICT
INTERFAITH ACTION

PRAYERS
From THE WORLD'S TRADITIONS - 2

As the rain hides the stars, as the autumn mist hides the hills, as the clouds veil the blue of the sky, so the dark happenings of my lot hide the shining of your face from me. Yet, if I may hold your hand in the darkness, it is enough. Since I know that, though I may stumble in my going, you do not fall.

A Celtic prayer.

**All is transient.
When you perceive this, you are above suffering;
The path is clear.
All is suffering.
When you perceive this, you are above suffering;
The path is clear.
All is unreal.
When you perceive this, you are above suffering;
The path is clear.**

The Buddha.

**I turn to You, because You are always beside me.
You created the healing powers of my body and the strength and courage of my spirit.
They are Your gifts to carry me from fear to confidence.**

Modern Jewish prayer.

Candifa
2 July 2020 · 🌐

More prayers from worlds traditions, for these troubled times.

Candifa
24 September 2022 · 🌐

Candifa members and guests enjoying the Rivers Walk with relevant readings from each fath and belief tradions.



👍❤️ 5 1 comment 3 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment 📧 Send ➦ Share

Most relevant ▾

Mike Stygal
Such a lovely event. So many similar reflections from different beliefs and worldviews, and a shared spiritual tranquility as well as a sense of togetherness experienced on our walk. 😊

1 y Like Reply

7) Social gatherings

Last, but very much not least, local inter faith organisations' programmes of activity always include social gatherings! These are enjoyable and also have the important function of enabling people from different faith and belief groups to get to know each other better. They can also be a great opportunity to engage civic figures such as MPs, councillors, mayors, Lord Lieutenants and High Sheriffs and others with a local inter faith organisation's work.

Many local inter faith organisations build in at least one large scale annual get together for all involved in their work – and often the wider public. These are sometimes coupled with presentations or a talk but after often focused just on the interaction itself.

The Big Lunch (an Eden Communities Project), the Great Get Together and Inter Faith Week and Scottish Interfaith Week are particularly popular times to do this and the International Day of Friendship is another.

Inter faith picnics are perennially popular.



Slough Faith Partnership Jubilee Big Lunch



Manchester Muslim Jewish Forum picnic in Abingdon Park



<https://tinyurl.com/yk9uis3t>

facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=fbid0295mx6C6SRLZeYMTPHkz2mD5T7ZQpmVPz6uz5KVIKTVBFgdbtZbuGyt7U7UjweI&id=

facebook.com/muslimjewish/posts/pfbid0Z4EzbxUf3nsiQjGxawot13BGZBLMNh6qBUY2KEfD5LFI4KZ2E2gItcQ4vW18b1EC1

facebook.com/ifnetuk/posts/pfbid0zUJ2UMok5MsU6AG4p'sxXzr6W9MmTBSXNB-SRdupznQxunKpRrWwYgKEUMqMqPHK5Z1

It can also be good to build in get togethers to mark such moments as anniversaries.



Gatherings may also be linked to AGMS or other occasions.



x.com/DialogueSociety/status/1725653610376110577



Note: For inclusiveness, organisers often opt for a vegetarian meal with kosher vegetarian and vegan options and other dietary requirements provided for if requested in advance. Meat and fish dishes are sometimes included at local inter faith events. Where that is the case, these are usually placed and served separately. Ham, beef and shellfish, in particular, are sometimes avoided given their proscribed status in particular religious traditions. A detailed note on catering can be seen at: [Catering and Faith Based Dietary Practice: Briefing Note – Resources – The Inter Faith Network \(IFN\)](#)

facebook.com/groups/BristolInterFaithGroup/posts/8143851538981270

facebook.com/groups/BristolInterFaithGroup/posts/8143851538981270



Focus on Luton Council of Faiths

Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) has worked since 1997 to:

- Bring together members of the different faith communities in Luton for deeper dialogue and cooperation
- Increase understanding and trust between different faiths, building on common ground between them yet respecting the unique contribution which each brings
- Bring about greater social cohesion and community integration in Luton
- Enable communities to work together on projects for the common good
- Facilitate strategic community and stakeholders engagement in policy and community development

It does this through a wide range of activities such as Luton's Annual Peace Walk, public discussions, cultural events, recreational sports projects, environmental and conservation work and public vigils. Programme areas, sometimes in collaboration with partner organisations, include schools (where it carries out a wide-ranging programme of work called Schools for Building Peace), environment and ecology, sport, youth engagement, and Fairtrade. It also runs training on interfaith, intercultural issues and mental health.

LCoF operated until 2000 under the name Luton Inter Faith Forum, having originally emerged from a project of the Grassroots programme in Luton, with which it continues to work closely.

LCoF meets regularly throughout the year and has six by-invitation Open Meetings for people from different faith communities and organisations in Luton, to members of Bedfordshire Police and the local authority. These are for discussion of any issues or concerns, global or local, impacting life locally and to share information on LCoF's activities, to strengthen cohesion in the town. It also works to enable



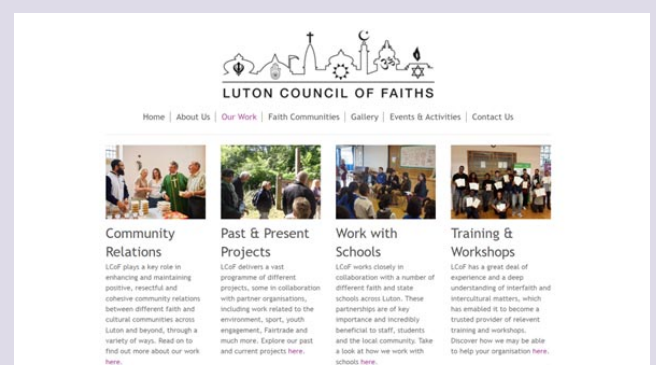
Luton Council of Faiths receiving Cohesion Award from Bedfordshire Police and Safer Luton Partnership

conversations at times of tension and diffuse tensions, for example when there have been far right marches in the town or impacts of difficult events locally, nationally or overseas.

LCoF comments that "Over the years we have gained significant trust, confidence and credibility in Luton, and work alongside a diverse array of agencies, organisations and community groups in matters relating to community cohesion." In 2021 it received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

LCoF is a registered charity with representatives from Luton's Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Quaker, Sikh and Zoroastrian communities. It is serviced by 2 Part-time employed staff supported by Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation (BLCF) as part of the Luton Rising Community Investment Fund.

www.lutonfaiths.org



Chapter 9: Communications

Local inter faith bodies have an important and positive narrative to share. Getting the message out enables more people to get involved and helps the significance and impact of the work be understood and appreciated better. Good communications – ‘comms’ – also help groups communicate well internally.

This chapter explores traditional ‘comms’ and also websites, social media, and digital meeting platforms.

1) A communications strategy

Some questions to think about

It's helpful for local inter faith organisations to develop a basic communications strategy, building on the following kinds of question:

- Who are we trying to reach?
- What types of communication channels may reach them best?
- What messages(s) do we want to get across?
- Do we have clear guidelines for what can be circulated by email or posted on social media?
- Who has the responsibility for creating and putting out material?
- Who will be responsible for setting up a website and who will update it?
- Who will be responsible for setting up Facebook, X or other social media platforms and who will then post content?
- Who may need to check any key communications, such as press releases?
- How will we respond to interest?
- How might we handle any negative responses?
- Who can speak ‘on behalf’ of our organisation?
- What cost in money and volunteer time may be involved in using the different modes of communication?

- If we are using digital communications, who will have the relevant passwords?
- What training may be needed?
- What relevant legislation may we need to keep in mind – eg data protection regulations?

Remember to ensure that communications are not exclusively online as this can result in the exclusion of those who don't use computers or smart phones. Digital media should complement other existing communication efforts rather than replace them.

A good strategy is a manageable one! In today's world of multiple different platforms for communicating, it is unlikely to be feasible for any small voluntary organisation - usually without staff - to give equal attention to all of them.

Choose a basic combination of options that members think will work well for the organisation and check on a regular basis that the strategy is working - that the secretary, or other designated person, is able to carry out their role smoothly using whatever way is agreed for exchange of information and that any website or social media platform is being updated regularly. If one or two members are kindly doing the social media comms and or/website, ensure that they have the necessary information to post and lots of good photos and video clips!

As well as thinking through what types of communication to use, groups who get their message across well usually have a regular system of drawing their activities to the attention of local media, local MPs, councillors, local authority staff, and others who can support and give their work higher profile.

On the digital dimension of a comms strategy, the following guidance was recently published by the Government:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-social-media/charities-and-social-media

A useful resource for charities is the Media Trust, which helps charities develop their communication and digital skills to connect better with their audiences. It runs training sessions on different topics and also has a number of useful resources on its website at mediatrust.org/communications-support/resource-hub/, for example, 'How to write a Press Release' mediatrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MediaTrust_writing_a_press_release.pdf.

Also useful is: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/digital-technology/

2) 'Speaking on behalf of' and statements

It is useful to have a policy about who can speak on behalf of the group and the parameters for issuing any statements. The Inter Faith Network for the UK's policy on making statements can be seen at www.interfaith.org.uk/news/statements-and-messages.

Statements need to be framed in such a way that they reflect and support the aims of an organisation and do not go beyond those. There is also a need to bear in mind the restrictions on political campaigning by charities. www.gov.uk/guidance/political-activity-and-campaigning-by-charities

3) Data protection

A basic data protection policy is needed. This is to ensure that whoever holds the contact details for mailings is clear what needs to be done to ensure that people have provided their consent for their details to be kept and used and that these details are not shared without permission. There are a number of helpful short guides to this, such as: www.buzzacott.co.uk/uploads/gdpr-a-guide-for-charities.pdf

4) Communication channel options

a) Emails and WhatsApp

Many local inter faith groups send out meeting details and newsletters by email, or via programmes such as MailChimp, to keep their members updated on meetings, events, projects and AGMs.

An increasing number of groups use WhatsApp for ongoing comms and to share photos. However, bear in mind that this can unintentionally exclude those who do not wish to use it or are unable to.

There are also pros and cons to using it as a messaging system for a group. See, for example, www.bot.space/blog/the-pros-and-cons-of-using-whatsapp-for-group-messaging

b) Phone and hard copy

For those who do not use computers or smartphones, it is very important to provide printed copies of communications, when requested, and also to keep in touch by phone.

c) Newsletters

Newsletters are useful both as a way to flag up future events and report on past ones. Although most are now digital, some readers need or appreciate printed newsletters.

'Concord Leeds Interfaith fellowship publishes an illustrated newsletter which comes out three times a year. It contains reports of meetings and news about inter faith activity in Leeds. This is Concord's main communication tool and it is complemented by its use of emails, a Facebook Group and periodic use of X.'

d) Flyers and posters

Traditional flyers and posters continue to be useful. The image of those can be used on social media but also put up the physical versions in places such as local places of worship and community centres.





5) Websites

These days, if people want to find out about an organisation they may well first look up on information online.

Websites and social media platforms are a window to local groups' work. But the viewer will only see what is put in the window - so its important to choose carefully and keep the content up to date and interesting.

Although some local inter faith bodies choose to operate with just a Facebook page, it is also helpful, where possible, to have a website with clear information with such information as:

- How to contact your local inter faith organisation
- What you do
- Who is involved
- Information on events and activities coming up
- A copy of your constitution or terms of reference and a copy of your last annual report
- Your charity and company details if relevant

Registered charities have a legal requirement to make their annual reports available to those who wish to see them, and a website is a good place to do that.

A website needs to be kept up to date so that it provides interested visitors to it with current information.

Some local inter faith organisations pay a developer to set up a website for them. However, there are a variety of website platforms or Content Management Systems, such as WordPress, Drupal and Wix which provide guidance to help people make their own. For

example, Wpbeginner offers a comprehensive step by step guide on how to create a WordPress website: www.wpbeginner.com/guides/.

There is usually an annual subscription for the hosting of most websites by the programme provider and it is important to look at costs at the outset.

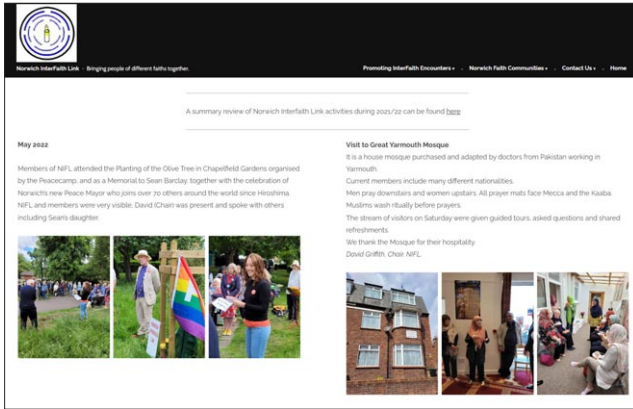
Always ensure that two people know the password to the website so that if one person leaves or is for some reason unavailable, it is still possible for the group to access the website.

Helpful information to include on a website

- Up to date contact information, including email and phone numbers.
- A contact email address or a contact form for people who wish to be in touch.
- Details of upcoming events.
- Photos and write-ups from past activities.
- Links to your organisation's social media accounts if applicable.
- Other optional extras like a faith festival calendar.
- Some brief information about the work of the group and the names of those with designated roles.

Norwich Interfaith Link is a meeting point for people of diverse religions, cultures and communities to share experiences and beliefs. As well as publicising its activity on Facebook and through their e-newsletter, it shares reports of NIFL events on its website. Written descriptions are complemented with visual content such as images, videos and graphics. Norwich InterFaith Link norwichinterfaithlink.wordpress.com/

Over 60% of web traffic comes from mobile phones. When people look at a website it will display differently if they are using a smartphone. Check that your website is optimised for viewing on mobile phones.



6) Social Media

a) Different social media platforms

In the UK, according to Statista, 56.2 million people in the UK were active on social media at the start of 2024. Increasingly, social media is an essential component of how local inter faith organisations communicate with their members and the general public. Widely used ‘platforms’ include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube and X. A more recent platform is Threads¹.

Social media is particularly important in reaching younger audiences who participate predominantly on some of these platforms. Most social media platforms also offer a messaging function whereby individuals or groups can directly message you with queries about your group and events that you are hosting.

i) Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the UK. Nearly 45 million Britons have accounts.

- Facebook has a help centre which gives guidance on topics such as setting up an account: www.facebook.com/help
- Users on Facebook have a personal ‘profile’ which they use to add friends, ‘like’ pages and post written and visual content.
- Most useful for local inter faith organisations is the ‘organisational page’ option. That is in the public domain (unlike private groups) and its posts can be easily ‘liked’ and ‘shared’. In order to set up an organisational page, you first need to have a personal profile.

¹ LinkedIn and Threads are used by very few local inter faith organisations so are not covered here.



- The platform also has ‘pages’ and ‘groups’ which allow various forms of interaction. For more information of how to make a ‘page’ see www.facebook.com/help/104002523024878 and to make a ‘group’ www.facebook.com/help/167970719931213.
- Facebook uses ‘tagging’ to help users identify users who are featured in content, and to alert users when they are featured in something. Guidance on that is at: www.facebook.com/help/26768947691603
- Facebook, like other social media platforms, makes use of ‘hashtags’. These are markers using the symbol # and a word or words which act a bit like a filing system. You can enter the hashtag in the search bar and anything tagged in that way will



facebook.com/events/938340187988654

www.instagram.com/interfaithglasg/

come up. For example, for Inter Faith Week, IFN uses the hashtag #InterFaithWeek.

ii) Instagram

Instagram is a platform used for photo and video sharing. There are over 35 million Instagram users in the UK alone. Although Instagram can be used in a limited format on a web browser, it is primarily designed for mobile phones and tablets.

- Information on setting up an Instagram account can be found at help.instagram.com/155940534568753.
- Individuals or organisations can create profiles where they share photos with followers on their 'Instagram feed. You must post a photo or video with every post – you cannot just post text.
- Visual imagery is very important on Instagram. There are a variety of functions such as reels, going live and stories. More information can be found at: help.instagram.com/314684928883274

iii) TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform which combines several media elements such as music, video, images, filtering and editing. TikTok currently has around 16 million UK users.

More time and creative effort need to be put into TikTok videos than other forms of social media. If your organisation has a large youth presence and has volunteers or paid team members able to dedicate a large amount of time to the platform then this may be the option for you. Otherwise, it may require too much time for your organisation because of the time required to edit videos and content.

- If you feel this a route that you wish to explore, then Charity Digital offers more information: charitydigital.org.uk/topics/topics/a-charity-guide-to-tiktok-8245

iv) Youtube

Youtube is the most used social media channel. It is a free video sharing website to which creators can upload content. Users can search for videos, and 'like' and comment on them and subscribe to channels.

It is a good medium for local inter faith organisations to share their work and a number now have channels.

A useful short introduction to using YouTube is www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-youtube-2655498



v) X

X (formerly Twitter) has 24.3 million users in the UK as of early 2024. It offers a variety of useful ways to interact with individuals and organisations and is a platform used by journalists and politicians, including at local level. It can be a great way of gaining the attention of councillors, mayors etc.

- Unlike Facebook, X does not distinguish between individuals and organisations and all accounts operate in the same way. You can sign up to X at help.x.com/en/using-x/create-x-account.
- X has a character limit of 280 characters for free accounts.
- Users can pay a monthly subscription to X to gain a Blue Tick. Subscribers are able to post content up to 4,000 characters and get priority in replies, posts and searches.
- You can repost the content of other users, 'like' and reply to posts. X also makes use of both hash tagging and tagging to assist users in searching for content. Tagging allows users to identify who is in a featured post and notifies those who are mentioned in it.
- An X username is also known as a 'handle' and appears after the '@' in your account name. The IFN's account name for example is @IFNetUK.

- X is a faster paced environment than Facebook and you will need to post regularly to build up a followership.

7) Creating content for social media

When you write posts for Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and other platforms:

- Make it snappy! Be concise, informative and, where appropriate, have a 'hook' in the opening statement of the post to grab the reader's attention so they will want to read on.
- Use photos and video clips where possible. They greatly increase the number of people who will interact with the post. Useful free images are available on stock photo websites such as www.pixabay.com/ and commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page.
- Video content makes a big difference.
- Aim to post a few times a week – either sharing recent news or, for example, posting relevant news articles, blogs, festival dates or inspirational quotes.
- Share relevant posts from other organisations.

Some posts, such as about religious festivals that have a fixed date throughout the year, can be planned and scheduled using websites such as Hootsuite and Sprout Social.

From time to time, check which posts are proving the most widely viewed or generating the most interaction. That helps give an idea of what is working well and whether there is a need to consider a different approach.

8) Dealing with 'trolls'

A possible hazard of using social media is becoming targeted by 'online trolls'. These are people who post – usually anonymously – negative and offensive comments about social media content. Engaging with comments, however, can sometimes escalate tensions and could negatively affect the public image of your local inter faith organisation if the responder is posting in its name. As a general rule, limit interaction with such comments to prevent inflammatory public discussion and just use functions such as 'hide comment' and 'block user'.

All social media platforms offer a function through which users can report hateful or offensive language. Guides to this process are listed below:

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/help/212722115425932
- Instagram: help.instagram.com/198034803689028
- TikTok: support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/report-a-problem
- X: help.x.com/en/safety-and-security/report-abusive-behavior
- Youtube: www.youtube.com/howyoutubeworks/policies/community-guidelines/

Make Tech Easier has published an article on how to block users on Instagram, Facebook and X which can be found at www.maketecheasier.com/block-users-social-media/ and Stop Hate has published information on how to report online hate crime www.stophateuk.org/about-hate-crime/what-is-online-hate-crime/how-to-report-online-hate/

Also relevant are:

- True Vision: a police-funded website which provides information about hate crime and a way to report hate crime to the police.
- Community Security Trust: an organisation which offers support for those who have been victims of antisemitism and offers a service to report hate speech.
- Tell Mama UK: is an independent and confidential support service for those who face anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice in the UK.
- Sikhguard: an initiative which encourages the reporting of hate crime against members of the Sikh community in the UK.

9) A social media glossary

- **Analytics**: a term used to describe social analysis tools and the data that is provided by these tools. Most social media platforms have analytic functions so organisations are able to gauge how well their posts are doing in terms of reach, impressions, engagement and follower growth.
- **Direct Messaging**: a direct message (DM) is a private message that is sent through a social media platform. DMs from non-followers are blocked and sent to an alternative secondary inbox. However,

inter faith groups who want to interact with members can change their settings to receive messages from anyone.

- **Engagement:** refers to any interactions that social media accounts have with your profile on social media such as 'likes', comments and sharing.
- **Facebook Page:** this is what organisations will have to represent them on Facebook and differs from a 'profile' which is what individual users have. Facebook pages must be linked to a personal account. The person who has the personal account to which the page is linked is known as the administrator of the page.
- **Followers:** social media accounts that have liked your profile or followed your account on social media.
- **Handle:** this is your username on social media and usually takes the form of @username. If you want to tag the accounts of other people you need to add their handle to your post. When you have multiple social media accounts it is advisory to use the same handle where possible to make it easier for potential followers to locate your accounts.
- **Hashtag:** a word or phrase which has the sign '#' in front of it such as #InterFaithWeek. Hashtags are used throughout social media as thematic markers which contribute to wider conversations and topics. Clicking on a hashtag reveals a collation of the latest posts which make use of the tag. Hashtags are also searchable if you would like to find out more about a certain topic or theme.
- **Hyperlink:** a word, phrase, image or link that you can click on and which takes you to a specific website.
- **Impression:** a metric which measures the number of times that a post was displayed on a social network. It is not a metric of how many people have seen a post, as a social media user might have the same post or ad appear in their feed on multiple occasions. Every time this shows up in this feed it is counted as one impression.
- **Newsfeed:** the term for the screen that shows all of the posts and activity of the accounts that you follow on Facebook. On other social media platforms the 'newsfeed' is merely known as your 'feed'.
- **Notification:** a message or alert which indicates social media activity. If someone was to repost one of your posts you will receive a notification on your mobile phone and/or computer which will alert you to this. Similarly, if someone liked your post on Facebook, you would also receive a notification.
- **Profile:** a place on social media platforms where you can share information about your organisation such as photos, videos, what your organisation does and your location.
- **Post:** any public social media status update, photo, video or even blog. Direct messages do not count as posts as they are private and can only be seen by you.
- **Reach:** a metric which refers to the amount of people who have been exposed to a post or ad. This doesn't that they've definitely seen your post as individuals may have scrolled past it. It indicates that your post has appeared on their feed.
- **Repost (RT):** the copying of another user's comments on X for your own followers to read. This is similar to the act of sharing on the Facebook platform.
- **Sharing:** the act of reposting another's content on your account's feed for your followers to see. This is very similar to the act of reposting on X.
- **Social Media Platforms:** a general term to refer to different systems of sharing information on the internet to a specific group of followers. Social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok and X.
- **Tag:** a keyword added to a social media post to categorise content. You can tag a person or an organisation in a post or photo which is more than merely writing about them in your post as they will receive a notification from this on their account. To do this, input an '@' before their name on Facebook, X and Instagram. When you do this on Facebook the '@' will disappear and a linked name will remain.
- **Troll:** a social media user who makes deliberately offensive posts or message with the aim of annoying other users.
- **URL:** a website link such as www.interfaith.org.uk/. URLs can often be very long and you can use software such as [Bitly](#) to shorten the length of hyperlinks.

- **Verified:** To be verified on social media platforms you generally must prove your identity to a social media platform provider for which you would receive a verified label on your account which usually takes the form of a tick. This is done to prove the legitimacy of account and to reduce the likelihood of fraud. However, X have recently changed their policy of verification and only accounts which are actively subscribed to X Blue are eligible to receive the blue checkmark. More information about this can be found at: help.x.com/en/managing-your-account/about-x-verified-accounts
- **X post:** a social media post on X which can only be formed of 280 characters, but can include photos and videos.

10) Online Meeting Platforms

Many local inter faith organisations adapted swiftly to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by moving meetings online, enabling them to maintain engagement with their membership and continue holding events. Some advantages of online meeting platforms, such as Zoom and MS Teams, include:

- There are lower costs for meetings and webinars due to absence of costs for travel, food or venue booking.
- Those with busy schedules can attend more frequently due to the flexibility of meeting patterns.
- It can be easier for people to attend who have mobility or health issues or caring responsibilities.
- Recording the meetings or presentations (with consent from attendees) means the meeting can become a resource for future reference.

There are also, however, disadvantages to online meetings - particularly if used to the exclusion of in person or hybrid ones. In person interaction can allow a more all-round engagement and and perhaps enable the holding of conversations that some might not feel comfortable having online.

a) Important considerations when using Zoom

- Zoom offers a detailed guide of how to set up an account and get started on the platform at: bit.ly/3SgGwql.
- It is important to ensure that you check the meeting settings before hosting meetings. Making sure that

the waiting room feature and passcodes are enabled is essential to safeguarding your meetings. Zoom has a helpful guide to keeping meetings safe and secure – [Best Practices for Securing Your Zoom Meetings](#).

- In Zoom, the host can mute and remove people from meetings if necessary if all other security precautions have failed.
- Chairing virtual meetings can be challenging as keeping an eye on who is signalling that they want to speak (either using the virtual ‘hand’ or by those who raise their hand onscreen physically), while seeing the face of the person currently speaking is harder to manage on Zoom than in a meeting room. Therefore, it can be helpful, if possible, to split the ‘chair’ role from the technical ‘host’ role or have a couple of people keeping an eye on raised hands who can help the chair keep on top of everything.
- Tasks such as reading meeting notes/papers, reading messages in the chat or Q&A functions or keeping a record of participants etc. can also be a challenge whilst trying to view the participants of the meeting and the speaker. Using two screens (e.g. a laptop plugged into a monitor) will enable the host or chair to have open the gallery view of participants on one screen and the participant list, papers etc on another.

b) Hybrid meetings

Sometimes meetings can be held in a hybrid format, which means that people can either attend in-person or online. There is more work involved in setting these up, as you need to make arrangements for both and more people will be needed on the day to look after both aspects of the meeting. However, they can help you to reach a wider audience and are one way for your meeting to be recorded and shared afterwards. If you do choose to hold hybrid meetings, it is important to ensure that all participants feel equally valued, however they are attending.

Glasgow University produced this useful short set of pointers on making hybrid meetings work well: www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_805586_smxx.pdf

Another useful resource is: www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/hybrid-meetings-in-person-and-online/

11) Press and broadcast media

Build up relationships with journalists, editors and presenters for outlets that cover your area and reach out and contact them to let them know when you have potentially interesting content.

Local media will often cover inter faith organisations' events where there is an angle of interest. Inter Faith Week is a time when there is quite a lot of coverage in the local press.

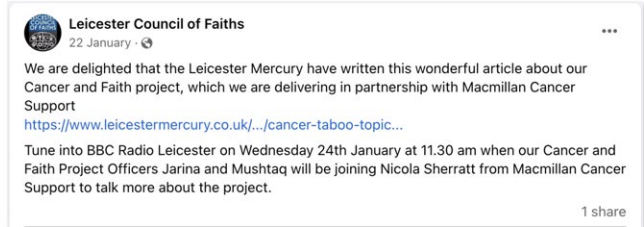
Stories about local inter faith organisations' activities can be of interest beyond the area. For example, the Burnley inter faith football tournament (see page 62) was featured on BBC Morning Live.

Writing a good press release is important. There are many guides to this online, for example: localtrust.org.uk/news-and-stories/blog/read-all-about-it-how-to-write-a-press-release/

It is helpful if local inter faith organisations have available individuals who are able to comment or give interviews. However, the point made at page 75 about 'speaking on behalf of' is important. A response on behalf of an inter faith body, rather than on behalf of an individual, needs to be balanced and in keeping with its purposes and whoever speaks on its behalf needs to be authorised to do so.



A number of local inter faith organisations have developed an ongoing relationship with one or more of their local radio stations, for example Birmingham Council of Faiths with Unity FM 93.5.



tinyurl.com/mtrcc5tww

12) Further Resources

The Media Centre provides a wide range of resources for communicating effectively: www.themediacentre.org/

The Religion Media Centre helps the media report and understand religion and beliefs: religionmediacentre.org.uk/ It also sometimes covers inter faith news in its online daily bulletin posts. Some of projects include a local faith groups focus, such as its Creating Connections programme.

- NCVO has a useful step by step guide for organisations on developing a communications strategy: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/digital-technology/understanding-digital-communications-campaigns-and-content/#/.
- Near Neighbours also produced social media guidance in 2018 which can be found at www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NEARNEIGHBOURS_SocialMediaToolkit_WEB.pdf
- IFN hosted a webinar in 2021 on digital upskilling which can be found at: www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/webinar-for-local-inter-faith-groups-on-digital-upskilling.
- IFN has a more detailed section on social media guidance with visual examples: www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/social-media-guidance
- Age UK offers a series of beginner guides to creating social media accounts on Facebook, X and Instagram: www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/work-learning/technology-internet/using-social-media.



Focus on Newcastle Council of Faiths

The origins of the Newcastle Council of Faiths lie in the 1970s when the then Director of the Tyne and Wear Racial Equality Council, drew together a group of religious leaders across the city. Over the years, a more formal structure emerged alongside that, and closely linked to it, which became the Newcastle Council of Faiths. That was formally established in 2003.

NCF works to advance religious harmony and education by promoting knowledge and mutual understanding and respect of belief and practices of different religious faiths, including awareness of their distinctive features and their common ground and to promote good relations between persons of different faiths.

NCF holds quarterly meetings to discuss such issues as what role religion and faith play in racial justice, faith perspectives on the impact of Covid and the role chaplains play in the NHS. It connects in with the different faith communities across the city and has an important role in maintaining solidarity in moments of crisis. It also has a linking function, keeping in touch with the many area level inter faith initiatives in Newcastle and its annual Peace Walk. It has a close working relationship with Newcastle City Council, Northumbria Police Community Engagement Team, Newcastle Hospital Trusts, Newcastle University and Northumbria University and a number of other bodies.

NCF arranges events such as Ramadan iftars, held in places of worship of three different faith communities; a Platinum Jubilee celebration tea, held at the local Reform Synagogue; and 'Coach Tour: Friendship through Faith' which is a tour which has taken faith leaders and NCF members to visit a series of place of worship during the last two Inter Faith Weeks.

Alongside the Council of Faiths, there is still a separate Religious Leaders' Group. That meets on an informal basis and discusses in a less public environment some of the items that are also on the agenda of the Council of Faiths.

NCF's events and activities are publicised by the Church of England Diocese and member faith groups. NCF has opted not to have a website and to use a private Facebook group rather than a public organisational page. This reflects a perspective that its work is best carried out on a 'relational' basis which may flourish best without public focus.

NCF has a small Trustee Board which is responsible for oversight of its work. It is an incorporated charity. It has both individual and organisational members. The latter include faith organisations. Individual members, and those on its wider contact list, span the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hari Krishna, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths.

www.facebook.com/groups/1426432514048621



A welcome event organised by NCF for the new Anglican Bishop Rt Revd Helen-Ann Hartley. Photo: Diocese of Newcastle

Chapter 10: Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing

Reviewing and evaluating activities gives an insight into what has worked well and what could have worked better. It can sometimes feel challenging to fit this in amid all the actual activities but it helps with thinking about how to continue to develop a local inter faith organisation's work well. So, too, does periodic exploration of whether its pattern of activities is still what is needed and developing strategic thinking for the way ahead.

1) Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

When planning work, it is important to build in basic outputs and outcomes that you are hoping to achieve so that these can be monitored along the way and when an activity or project finishes it is possible to assess how far they have been achieved.

There are a wide range of helpful resources available on planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and impact measurement.

NCVO's website has sections on monitoring, evaluation and impact with step by step guidance. See, eg, www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/impact-evaluation/planning-your-impact-and-evaluation/monitoring-and-evaluation-frameworks/

Near Neighbours' resource, www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources, is a more general Impact and Evaluation Toolkit. Also relevant is its [Finding Out: Researching and Monitoring for Project Fundraising](#) resource which gives examples of how to conduct community research, from simple interviews to holding public meetings.

The Woolf Institute's 'How to Measure Success: A toolkit for the evaluation of local interfaith engagement' can be downloaded from [Measures of Success: a Toolkit for the Evaluation of Interfaith Engagement](#). It has been developed for people involved in inter faith work at the community and grassroots level.

IFN's evaluation resource for Inter Faith Week at www.interfaithweek.org/uploads/Inter_Faith_Week_

[Toolkit.pdf](#) (p30) is an example of a checklist for evaluating particular activities, particularly events.

A **New Philanthropy Capital** paper, [Balancing act: A guide to proportionate evaluation](#), contains some pointers on choosing appropriate levels/types of evaluation.

2) Reviewing work

Local inter faith organisation members have often spoken at IFN meetings over the years about the need to ensure that their groups' activities remain well-focused, responsive to local needs and sustainable. Here are some of the steps they have taken to do that:

- Revisiting and reviewing the aims and objectives of the group
- Doing a 'SWOT' analysis of Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats
- Considering how local inter faith needs in their area may have changed and also whether there are other initiatives now also responding to some of those
- Analysing the religious make-up of the area and considering how the inter faith group is engaging with the different faith groups
- Thinking about the wider social and political environment and particular factors such as increase focus on the environment or hate crime rise
- Considering whether outreach can be improved
- Visiting another local inter faith organisation in a different area to learn from their approach and exchange ideas
- Exploring whether the group's programme is meeting the needs of both established and new members

To find out more about how to do a SWOT analysis and other ways to think about a local inter faith organisation's work in the context of its operating environment see, for example, www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/strategy-and-business-

planning/understanding-your-landscape-and-conditions/

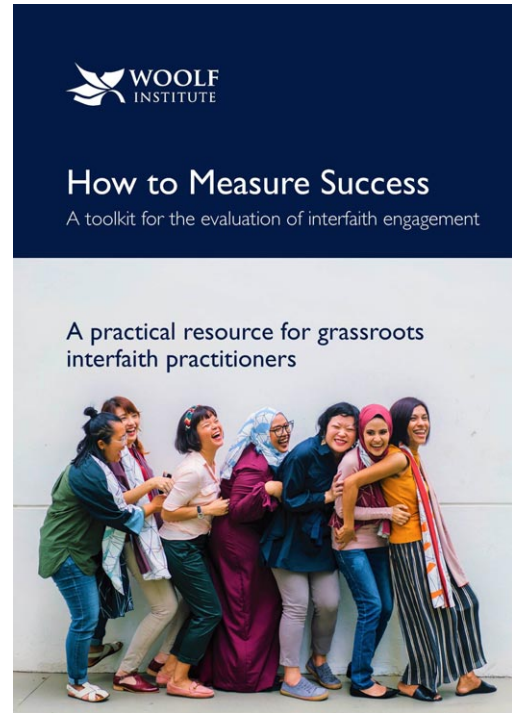
Some organisations find it helpful to develop something called a ‘theory of change’. This can be thought of as a map showing the journey or paths from the activities of the organisation to the desired social impacts they hope to achieve. It is often developed through workshop type discussion involving a range of stakeholders. It’s an approach which encourages organisations to reflect on their goals and plans (their strategy), to discuss them with others and to make sure they’re clearly understood.

Find out more about ‘Theory of Change’ at: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/strategy-and-business-planning/theory-of-change/

Lastly, it is always good to get feedback and that sometimes comes through welcome posts on social media, such as the one from Bracknell Town's Mayor below.



facebook.com/MayorBTC/posts/pfbid04aDgcyga5z3cdDkDjXldmKzEzVArHezqxuLTSURPDHgd3ucWDxxb9UrgpvBI4sI



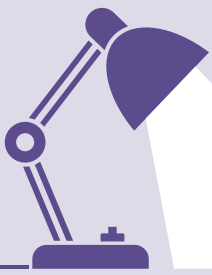
3) A strategy for the way ahead

Evaluation and review of work and exercises such as a SWOT analysis or a Theory of Change are often the basis for creation of a local inter faith body’s strategy for the coming period.

A Strategic Plan usually covers a period of 3 or more years. Faith Network for Manchester, for example, recently developed a 5 year plan.



www.facebook.com/FN4M/posts/pfbid023En9AQbyy9qar7eL4PL9hYmW5hu8HfLm9Ukdo7RQ9HxzqdtWZQYrN2scjuiG1stI



Focus on Swansea Interfaith Forum



Swansea Interfaith Forum (SIF) is an informal group made up of people who come from many different faiths and cultures, uniting together to build friendship. They work together for the following purposes:

- To share and build knowledge of each other's faiths and beliefs
- To arrange events to celebrate and promote inter-faith dialogue

SIF has been involved in regular events, including a full programme of activities for Inter Faith Week each year. Examples of these include a film night on *The Sultan and the Saint* and a Women in Leadership panel with three female leaders, the Bishop of Monmouth, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain and an SGI-UK leader (Buddhist).

The Forum has a close link with Swansea University. For example, it has organised an online LGBT+ interfaith service of music, readings, personal stories and reflections, with Swansea University and the Students' Union. In response to the war in Ukraine, with the Swansea University Faith team, a regular, weekly in person and online interfaith 'Pray for Peace' session was initiated.

SIF also has a strong link with Swansea City Council, which has encouraged its development and promotes its Inter Faith Week events.



The Forum has a focus on shared learning and cohesion, It puts an emphasis on exploring new ways of gathering and engaging, through a variety of events and in-person, Zoom and hybrid activities.

The Forum encourages broad engagement by the people of Swansea. In a 'statement of intent' in the context of Zero Racism Wales, the Forum it says that it "welcomes the breadth and diversity of tradition, belief and culture of the community. It seeks to create, maintain and promote a community in which each person is treated fairly and equally irrespective of race."

The Forum is in the process of establishing a more formal constitution to access funds to extend its reach, It is run on a voluntary basis, with assistance from the University with some activities.

www.facebook.com/SwanseaInterfaith

Chapter 11: Sustainability

In the early days of an initiative, high levels of energy help start the ball rolling. People are enthusiastic and make an extra effort to come to meetings and get the right people involved.

1) Sustainability tips

From the outset, it is helpful to think about sustainability. Here are some tips shared by local inter faith organisation members over the years:

- Gain, and seek to maintain, broadly based involvement from different faith groups (and belief groups if they take part) from the outset
- Regularly speak with local faith leaders and visit places of worship
- Keep activity focused and relevant
- Aim for a programme that appeals to both existing and new members
- Include social action projects, such as tree planting, in your programme alongside talks and other activities
- Aim always to work for a place of consensus
- Be cautious about issuing statements – particularly about potentially controversial or overseas issues
- Maintain clear structures of decision making and hold regular meetings of the committee
- Plan for succession and aim to bring on new committee members
- Learn from other local inter faith organisations in the region and beyond
- Provide strong mutual support during difficult periods
- Seek to ensure that venues are fully accessible
- Send out a strong message of inclusion
- Engage with young people, through schools, youth organisations, colleges and universities
- Create strong partnerships with other relevant organisations such as the local authority, SACRE and emergency services

- Formalise your relationship with the local authority, for example through a ‘faith covenant’
- Keep your MP and councillors informed and involved – invite them to key events
- Ensure regular coverage in local media
- Use Inter Faith Week and other routes to boost your profile and get new people involved
- Affirm people’s work!

Many of the above have been covered in other parts of the guide. Four are explored further below:

2) Maintaining a strong pattern of involvement

Some local inter faith groups have a regular schedule where each year a member or members explore whether there are particular faith groups that need to be drawn into the work. Those might be new ones or they may be groups whose participation has dropped.

If there are gaps in the pattern of participation, it may be helpful to ask straightforward questions about why people are not involved in the group and make some changes to remedy the situation. Might timing, venue or type of meeting be relevant?



www.facebook.com/groups/252538794762148/posts/5684798796202760

3) Mutual support

Local inter organisations can sometimes find it hard to sustain their activity during times when funding may have dwindled, enthusiasm has waned or committee members and other volunteers are becoming unable to maintain sometimes onerous levels of responsibility due to other obligations, illness, or aging.

Accounts of such situations shared with IFN over the years reflect a mixture of outcomes. Sometimes, new people have been drawn in to reinvigorate the group; other times, with strong mutual support and encouragement, groups have survived and revived after as much as several years in semi-dormancy; and in a few cases the organisations have decided to close.

There is no indignity in closure where resources don't permit continuation and where a group may in fact have done the work it was set up to do and where other initiatives are emerging locally. Where groups do close, recognising the important work that they have done is important.

NCVO have produced this resource for charities and other voluntary organisations that are closing: www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/closing-your-charity/

See also 'Seizing opportunities' and 'Succession planning' below.

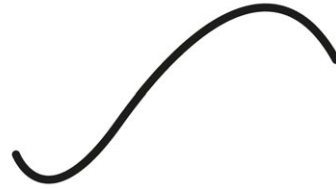
4) Staying in connection during challenging periods

Local inter faith organisations have also faced challenges when international difficulties make an impact on inter faith relations on a local level. Again, there is no easy fix for that. Even long-term relationships can be affected and it can be hard to judge whether and how to try and reach out or to respond to others' reaching out when even the most simple conversation feels as though it could go badly awry. For inter faith groups, which are all about connecting and mutuality, this can feel profoundly upsetting.

Low key opportunities to be present at the same events, small gestures, expression of continued care, are the kinds of steps that people report as helping from their experience of dealing with such times of difficulty. Good inter faith relations are not worked for once, they are the reflection of continued endeavour.

5) Seizing opportunities

The popular organisational behaviour and management theorist Charles Handy describes the life of organisations (and indeed 'all things human') by reference to 'sigmoid curves': 'S' shaped lines that are tilted toward the horizontal:



Beginning at the left, when setting up a new organisation or initiative, there is usually a period when the effort and energy put into it exceeds its output – this is why the curve begins with a downward trajectory. Then as the initiative begins to bear fruit, the curve starts to head in an upward direction. Hopefully the group goes from strength to strength and the sense of being on the up continues for a long time. Eventually, however, things peak, plateau, and begin to decline. Enthusiasm may have faded, founders or stalwarts may have moved on or there may be a sense that an initiative has achieved its early aims. This dynamic affects all organisations at some point or another.

There is good news, however. Organisations and initiatives can reinvent or reenergise themselves. It is possible to add a second curve:



The challenge, according to Handy, is timing the second curve to begin before the first curve has peaked, while there is still enough momentum, enthusiasm, energy and/ or resources to invest in a new direction. Trying to reinvent gets harder the further along the first curve that the second curve begins – if there is already a sense of decline or waning enthusiasm, the job will be much harder and may not be possible at all.

It is important for local inter faith organisations to keep a look out for new opportunities, and to try to seize those unlooked-for opportunities that may

present themselves. This does not (and should not) mean embracing ‘mission drift’ (drifting away from their purposes and mission). However, the priorities of organisations may change over time, and there may be new pieces of work or new approaches that achieve the same aims.

Some local inter faith organisations have found a renewed sense of purpose through embracing a particular cause or project, for example adding a strand of work that is specifically focussed on the urgent issue of climate change or working with others locally to provide support to newly arrived refugees in the community. Others have embraced initiatives such as the Faith Covenant or Cities of Sanctuary, which enable them to make common cause with other types of body. Many groups have also developed particular ‘showcase’ activities for which they have become well known, such as an annual peace walk or faith trail; an annual service or concert; a programme for Inter Faith Week; a ‘carousel of faiths’ or ‘speed faithing’ activity; and in at least one case even an annual pantomime. These kinds of activities often have a broader appeal and enable local inter faith groups to reach an audience far beyond their membership.

Sometimes, local groups may take a more radical change in their approach, moving from one type of initiative – such as one primarily focussed on educating its members – to another – such as one that acts as a consultative forum for public and statutory bodies in the local area (and vice versa).

6) Affirming and honouring people’s contributions

You don’t, of course, have to wait for closure to acknowledge the importance of work!

Most local inter faith work is done by volunteers – they are the life blood of inter faith organisations. Regular opportunities to affirm that contribution are important. Inter Faith Week, Trustees Week and Volunteers Week are good times to highlight special contributions.

Sometimes groups recognise special contributions by making individuals patrons or giving them life membership.

Applying for and receiving an award as a group can be particularly affirming. A number of local inter faith organisations, such as Islington Faiths Forum, Luton

Council of Faiths and Wolverhampton Interfaith received the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service.

Find out how to nominate a voluntary organisation for the King’s Award for Voluntary Service, the highest Award given to local voluntary groups in the UK: [The King’s Award for Voluntary Service - official website \(dcms.gov.uk\)](https://www.dcms.gov.uk/interfaith)

7) Succession planning

Most organisations find that, as time goes by, key individuals – such as founders, officers or people with particular enthusiasm for the organisation – either move on entirely or are unable to play the role that they have previously played. There can be many reasons for this, including simply moving out of an area or an increase in responsibilities at home or at work. Members of organisations also age, which can present a particular challenge if membership has remained relatively fixed and no new people have joined. It is therefore vital to consider succession planning, ideally (linking to the ‘second curve’ idea above) before the issue presents itself.



www.facebook.com/ifweek/posts/pfbid0AXRXBy42de6p5eYqHmUXfrFLk2LZj8McnjSvWgDdbZrWh3dGyJCuZugzmi8l

It is vital to the longevity of organisations that regular thought is given to succession planning. Things to consider include:

- Is the organisation attracting/ retaining new members?
- Are officers/ committee members actively encouraging other members to consider standing for their roles in the future?
- Are there term limits in place/ a regular pattern of change for officer/ committee roles?
- Is there diversity (including in age, gender, faith/belief) among the membership, or are people increasingly of similar age, background etc?

a) Term limits

When considering whether there should be term limits for officer and committee roles, it is important to consider not just the present make-up of the group but also how things may change over time. When an organisation has dedicated trustees or officers, it can be difficult to imagine how things would continue without them. It may also be difficult to imagine anyone else wanting some roles! However, it can also be the case that newer members might be put off from considering standing for certain roles if there is a sense that “that is so and so’s role and I wouldn’t want to upset them by standing against them in an election” (even if, as is sometimes the case, the person in question might like nothing better than to retire!). Building in regular elections and term limits can make things easier for everybody, creating natural points at which these conversations can be had.

b) Young people

There can sometimes be a tendency to confuse succession planning with a need to attract and engage with young people (however defined). There are very good reasons to engage with young people as part of a local inter faith organisation’s programme, and this is explored in chapter 8. However, doing so primarily as a succession planning strategy may not be helpful and are unlikely to really meet the needs and desires of the young people themselves. Local inter faith organisations often note that young people with whom they’ve made links tend to move away from the local area when they reach an age where they will be seeking out further or higher education or employment opportunities.

8) Training and support

A voluntary organisation is more sustainable where volunteers and staff feel they have skills needed to carry out the work well. Consider inviting someone from the local CVS or a training organisation to come every two or three years to do a short session with your committee on different aspects of running voluntary initiatives. Also look to source free or subsidised short courses on such as topics computer and digital skills and comms.

9) Financial sustainability

As noted in other chapters, many local inter faith organisations operate with no income at all, and most operate with only modest budgets.

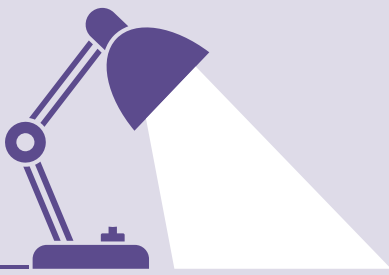
For any organisation with a budget, however, the prospect that income may fall – or that demand for services will increase faster than income – is a concern. It can therefore be helpful to develop a basic financial sustainability plan, and to ensure that financial risks are mitigated where possible and managed where not.

Further information can be found in the [NCVO Financial Management resource pages](#), which includes a section on financial difficulties.



Mayor of Oxford and MP for Oxford East joining Oxford Council of Faith members on their annual Friendship Walk

facebook.com/share/p/vSke4J2dgpck7SWz



Focus on Woking People of Faith

Woking People of Faith (WPoF) was founded in 2006. Its aim is to 'promote community and religious harmony for the benefit of the public in Woking and its environs'. Its objectives are to:

- celebrate the important contribution that religious faith makes to the lives of the local community;
- seek to secure a more prominent role for faith organisations in their communities;
- promote good relations between people of different faiths;
- advance the education and understanding of different beliefs including an awareness of their distinctive features and their common ground; and
- promote knowledge, mutual understanding and respect of the beliefs and practices of different faiths.

WPoF holds regular public meetings; activities for women; and activities for youth. It also organises inter faith social events. These activities include an annual Peace Day event; regular inter faith sports events, such as an annual football tournament and cricket (see their past events page); Ladies' Coffee Mornings; Zoom 'cookalongs'; talks from speakers of different faiths about how they put their faith into practice in everyday life; and the Byfleet Pilgrimage where people walk to visit different local faith

institutions to learn about their respective faith traditions and speak to people of other faiths during the walk. It has an Events Committee made up of Trustees and supporters which plans and organises a variety of events through the year to ensure the charity reaches as many people as possible.

Education is another key area of WPoF's work. It works with Primary and Secondary Schools, Colleges and other educational institutes to 'enrich student's experience of Religious Studies with direct links to practising people of faiths and beliefs.' It has a multi faith team of speakers who can visit faith institutions. It also has an Environmental Diversity Working Party which helps the Horsell Common Preservation Society preserve the natural biodiversity of Horsell Common twice a year.

WPoF has an active outreach to new potential members and volunteers, its website home page carrying the message: "We are a fun, friendly, diverse organisation - all of us have benefitted from a greater understanding of each other's religious and cultural experiences and we are sure you would, too." This is part of a broader online presence, including a regularly updated website and active use of Facebook to share group news, 'thought for the week' pieces from members of different faiths, and local news of interest such as about local consultation and projects.

WPoF's membership includes Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian (Church of England, Catholic and Free Church), Hindu, Jewish, Muslim (Shi'a and Sunni) and other recognised world faith communities with groups in the Woking area.

WPoF is a registered charity. It has 1 part-time employee. It has, since inception, received grants towards its work from Woking Borough Council at varying levels.

www.wpof.org.uk



WPoF marking International Peace Day

Chapter 12: An action points checklist

Even though approaches of different local inter faith organisations will vary - a checklist based on some key points in the guide may be helpful.

1) Getting under way

- Consider whether a new local inter faith organisation is needed.
- Consult on what kind may be needed; who it may serve; and what area it will cover.
- Discuss what type of local inter faith organisation may be desired: informal or formal? Reflective/representative of local faith groups?
- Start the process of discussing the new organisation's Aims, Mission, Vision and Values.
- Think about its ethos and ground rules / principles for interaction.
- If it will be a formally structured body, reach out to local faith organisations, the local authority and other relevant bodies to take the discussion further.
- Consider the pattern of membership, including, for example, whether this will include belief groups as well as faith groups.
- Choose a name.
- Think about the human and financial resources needed and explore sources of possible support.
- Begin to put the nuts and bolts in place – volunteer support, safeguarding and other policies, financial arrangements, and any insurance required.
- Finalise terms of reference or a constitution suitable for the type of structure you are setting up (for example a charitable unincorporated organisation or a charity) and with provisions which reflect your aims and the governance underpinnings for taking those forward.
- Agree basics such as your pattern of meetings.
- Agree a logo (if one is desired).

- Develop a basic communications strategy – including handling of any statements and who may speak on behalf of the organisation.
- Plan a launch and early activities.
- Invite faith leaders and faith group members, local MPs and councillors and other civic figures to the launch.
- Begin to develop a programme for the coming period.
- Refine any of the early agreements, such as on comms, where that is needed.

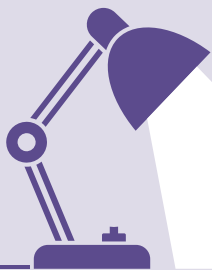
2) Taking the work forward – whether your organisation is newly launched or longstanding

- Work to develop the organisation in ways which give people a sense of equity and inclusion and build trust.
- Operate in compliance with any legal requirements.
- Keep in mind the sustainability tips on page 87.
- Seek to develop and grow links and partnerships that can strengthen the work – for example with statutory agencies, educational institutions and sports clubs.
- Consider developing a formal relationship with the local authority – possibly even helping work towards a 'faith covenant' where there is not one.
- Seek to build a programme of activity which helps put the organisation's aims into practice and which is effective, interesting and enjoyable, helps those involved and also the local community, and builds relationships along the way.
- Develop strong communications, including digital comms.
- Invite civic figures such as your local MP, mayor, council leader, Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff to any special events.

- Provide training and support for tasks that may need those – including for people to learn new digital skills.
- Use Inter Faith Week and other useful platforms to highlight the organisation’s important work.
- Give consideration to whether a women’s inter faith group or forum and/or a youth forum might be helpful to develop down the line.

3) Review, evaluate and renew

- Take time, on a regular basis, to evaluate how your work is developing.
- Look for and seize new opportunities.
- Each year, think about the pattern of participation and thinking about fresh visits and conversations that may be needed to boost faith groups’ involvement.
- Seek to work through tough times as best possible – good inter faith relations are not worked for once, they are the reflection of continued endeavour.
- Succession plan so that there are new people ready to take on roles when needed.
- Celebrate and give thanks for the work of the organisation and for the contributions of individuals.
- Never forget the importance of your local inter faith organisation’s work.



Focus on York Interfaith Group

York Interfaith Group (YIG) has been active since 1989. Its aims are “to foster good relationships, mutual understanding, harmonious social activities and unifying actions among people of all faiths and beliefs.” YIG links in membership individuals as well as local groups and faith communities in York. This breadth of connection is well illustrated in the special ‘lockdown quilt’ that was created during lockdown, with panels made by each of the different faiths reflecting the impact of Covid 19 on religious worship and rites of passage.

YIG’s wide range of activities include monthly discussions which are open to members and non-members alike. Recent topics have included expanding the boundaries of religious education in schools, ‘Sacred Earth: how can we recover our bond with the natural world’ and ‘Faith and working with people with mental health issues’. YIG also holds and takes part in other kinds of activities, such as an annual visit to a place of worship. In March 2023 it took part in a commemoration to mark the massacre in 1190 of York’s Jewish population at Clifford’s Tower and it supports and takes part in Holocaust Memorial Day each year in York, YIG operates in a city with relatively less ethnic and religious diversity than



The ‘lockdown quilt’ created by York Interfaith



Opening Inter Faith Week in York with tree care event

some and has always been aware of the importance of its role in working to promote understanding of different faiths. One of the very visible ways that it does this is through a week-long programme each year for Inter Faith Week, which sees activities happening across the city which involve all the faith groups. This sees many partnership events with bodies such as the University of York, the York St John University, the City of York Council, York Explore library and York SACRE. During the 2022 Week, for example, it ran a competition for schools with York SACRE for pupils to design a new YIG Logo and did a joint project with the Council, Treemendous, the Woodland Trust and JustServe, planting and caring for trees, contributing to the environmental approach of managing floods in York.

YIG uses a monthly newsletter to share its programme, religious festival dates and issues of interest and speakers from YIG contribute regularly to the ‘Thought for the day’ slot on Jorvik Radio.

Membership is open to anyone interested. There is a small subscription fee. Members receive YIG communications, have voting rights in all group matters, and can be nominated for Management Committee honorary officer and co-opted into sub-committees or working groups. All YIG’s roles are voluntary.

www.yorkinterfaith.org

Member Organisations of the Inter Faith Network for the UK

Faith Community Representative Bodies

Baha'i Community of the UK
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
Board of Deputies of British Jews
Buddhist Society
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
Churches Together in England
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK)
Druid Network
General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
Hindu Council (UK)
Hindu Forum of Britain
Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain
Institute of Jainology
Jain Network
Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain (Association of Muslim Scholars)
Methodist Church in Britain
Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
Muslim Council of Britain
Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
Pagan Federation
Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
Salvation Army United Kingdom and Ireland Territory
Spiritualists' National Union
Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB
United Reformed Church in the UK

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)
World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
World Zoroastrian Organisation
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

Educational and Academic Bodies

ASHA Foundation
Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme
City, University of London Chaplaincy
Durham University Chaplaincy Network
Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts at the University of Wales Trinity St David
Islamic Foundation
Middlesex University Inter Faith Network
National Association of SACREs
OneSpirit Interfaith Foundation
Religious Education Council of England and Wales
Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter
University of Lincoln Multi-Faith Chaplaincy
University of Salford Faith Centre
Wales Association of SACREs
Woolf Institute

National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations

Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
Interfaith Scotland
Inter-faith Council for Wales/Cyngor Rhyngffydd Cymru
Faiths Forum for London
North East Regional Faiths Network
South East England Faith Forum
All Faiths Network UK

Children of Abraham (Imams and Rabbis Council of the United Kingdom)
Christian Muslim Forum
Christians Aware Interfaith Programme
Council of Christians and Jews
East of England Faiths Agency
Faith and Belief Forum
Faith for the Climate
Interfaith Alliance UK
International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)
International Interfaith Centre
Khalili Foundation
London Boroughs Faiths Network
Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby
Nisa-Nashim
Religions for Peace (UK)
Scriptural Reasoning
St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace
St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society
United Religions Initiative (UK)
Westminster Interfaith
Women's Interfaith Network
World Congress of Faiths

Local Inter Faith Groups

Altrincham Inter Faith Group
Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum
Barnet Multi Faith Forum
Bath Interfaith Group
Bedford Council of Faiths
Birmingham Council of Faiths
Blackpool Faith Forum
Bolton Interfaith Council
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Interfaith

Bracknell Forest Interfaith Forum	Lancashire Forum of Faiths	Southampton Council of Faiths
Bradford Concord Interfaith Society	Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship	Southwark Multi Faith Forum
Brent Multi-Faith Forum	Leeds Faiths Forum	Stafford and District Friends of Faith
Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group	Leicester Council of Faiths	Swindon Inter Faith Group
Bristol Inter Faith Group	Interfaith Forum for Leicestershire	Faiths United (Tameside)
Bristol Multi-Faith Forum	Loughborough Council of Faiths	Torbay Faith and Belief Forum
Building Bridges in Burnley	Luton Council of Faiths	Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum
Building Bridges Preston	Maidstone Inter Faith Network	Wakefield Interfaith Network
Calderdale Interfaith Council	Faith Network for Manchester	Warwick District Faiths Forum
Cambridge Inter-Faith Group	Mansfield Interfaith Group	Watford Inter Faith Association
Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action	Medway Inter Faith Action Forum	Wellingborough Inter Faith Group
Cheltenham Inter Faith	Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)	Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group
Cleveland and Tees Valley Inter Faith Group	Milton Keynes Council of Faiths	Westminster Faith Exchange
Cornwall Faiths Forum	Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester	William Campbell-Taylor (City of London Interfaith)
Coventry Multi-Faith Forum	Newcastle Council of Faiths	Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum
Crawley Interfaith Network	North Herts Faith Forum	Wisbech Interfaith Forum
Faiths Together in Croydon	North Kent Interfaith	Interfaith Wolverhampton
Cumbria Interfaith Forum	North Kirklees Inter Faith	Woking People of Faith
Devon Faith and Belief Forum	Northampton Inter Faith Forum	Worcestershire Inter-Faith Forum
Elmbridge Multi-Faith Forum	Norwich InterFaith Link	York Interfaith Group
Exeter Faith and Belief Group	Nottingham Inter Faith Council	
Gateshead Interfaith Forum	Oldham Inter Faith Forum	
Greater Yarmouth Inter Faith and Belief Network	Building Bridges Pendle - Interfaith Community Project	<i>As after July 2023 AGM</i>
Harrow Interfaith	Peterborough Inter-Faith Council	
Hastings and Rother Interfaith Forum	Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity	
Hertsmere Forum of Faiths	Plymouth Council of Faiths	
Hillingdon Inter Faith Network	Reading Interfaith Group	
Hounslow Friends of Faith	Redbridge Faith Forum	
Hull and East Riding Interfaith	Richmond Inter-Faith Forum	
Inter Faith Isle of Man	Rugby Inter Faith Forum	
Islington Faiths Forum	Salford Interfaith Network	
Keighley Interfaith Group	Sheffield Inter Faith	
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Inter-Faith Forum	Slough Faith Partnership	
Faiths Together in Lambeth	Solihull Faiths Forum	
	South London Inter Faith Group	
	South Shropshire Interfaith Forum	

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