

**'Faith Makes Community Grow'**

**Report & Evaluation  
of  
Workshop**

*4 May 2006 - Durrant Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne*

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*glenn rose*

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**NOTE FROM REPORT-WRITER ...**

In writing the report of this conference, *Faith Makes Community Grow*, I've tried to be as comprehensive as possible. There was a lot of information, much subject for discussion. And as so often much that was valuable was to be found in the detail sparked off by discussion. I hope the account preserves the 'much that was valuable' in the whole proceedings, for both participants and any others who would otherwise have liked to attend.

Similarly, Workshop Appendices contain as much of the presentations and discussion as possible. For these, I duly thank those who gave me their own notes:

Sue Blackbird, Ian Hunter-Smart, Jim Robertson, Bob Finch, Sheelin Kilroy and Peter Lawson

- since one person could obviously not be everywhere ... However, transcribing and presentation of notes here (*and errors in doing so*) are my responsibility alone.

In some instances, information that was mentioned in passing has had more precise reference inserted. With this, as with the general report, I have of course tried to be as accurate as possible: but cannot accept responsibility for difficulties encountered by inadvertent error (as cannot CRC).

*glenn rose*

May 2006

## **PART 1: REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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### **CONFERENCE CHAIR'S WELCOME** - Paul Southgate (Chief Officer, CRC)

'Why faith communities' involvement in community development?' asked PS. The conference had been planned to explore some different answers to the question. Some examples -

- to help make sense of partnerships (eg *S Tyneside Faith Communities' Directory*)
- to fulfil a lobbying function (eg *Middlesbrough Council of Faith's* work)
- to help 'inclusion' (eg *Generation & Gender workshop*)
- to contribute to community development in regeneration (see later, for example, *Gerry Lee's workshop on Local Strategic Partnerships: App.* )
- in helping support networks for vulnerable communities (eg '*Refugees into Sustainable Employment*' workshop)
- supporting volunteering (eg *Les Hann's workshop, 'Faith Communities in a Rural Setting'*).

There is also the question, how public authorities and services understand faith communities - and to improve such understanding.

### **INTRODUCTION** - Jim Robertson (*Community Development North East*).

*CDNE* is a newish network, set up about two years ago. It has a regional focus: one aim is to provide a wider perspective through its relationships with bodies such as the Regional Development Agency , Becon, *VONNE* and other regional organisations and bodies. It is also building broad-based involvement of organisations themselves involved in community development. At present, *CDNE* 's administrative base is in Sunderland. *CWACNEE* ('*Community Work Accreditation Consortium North East England*') based in Sunderland act as the managing agency fro *CDNE*.

The current series of conferences aims to give a chance for different kinds of networks to think and talk about aspects of their work. To date the conferences have focussed on Social Enterprise, BME Groups and their concerns and interests, Communications and Information Management. Later on, in June and July, we have Rural Issues and Community Development and Community Development in Local Authorities.

### **'GOVERNMENT POLICY IN SUPPORT OF FAITH COMMUNITIES'** - Rob Strachan (Head of Community Policy, *Government Office North East*) [*see Appendix 2 for supporting slide presentation*]

'What does *GONE* do?' RS explained that he would be talking about practice rather than policy. Ten Government departments fund *GONE* to deliver *PSA* targets. Its job is to create and maintain relationships with local organisations in the region, to act as a channel of communication, and to inform policy and practice. Its rôle has changed, as well, to one of 'challenging' local activity.

**Policy Environment** is complex, but some features of its impact on faith communities are -

- that public bodies have yet to understand the nature of 'advisory' and 'representational'
- the importance of faith communities as part of the wider community
- infrastructure: a question as to whether faith communities have their own, or fits into that of the broader community. RS cited the range of practice,

comparing Newcastle with Middlesbrough [see report of Workshop 2, in Appendix 1]

**Key Messages**, challenges for faith communities, are -

- the issue of whether and when their rôle is advisory, or representational
- the lack of confidence on the part of public bodies in dealing with faith communities
- the importance of helping the broader community to understand the breadth and variety of faith communities' activity: RS pointed to *South Tyneside Faith Based Organisations* directory [see report of Workshop 1, in Appendix 1]

as a useful example

- the importance of taking part in the economic as well as social change that had to comprise the region's regeneration: and of taking part in local Strategic Partnerships [see report of Workshop 4, in Appendix 1].

**From GONE, Key Messages to faith communities** are -

- that *GONE* wants, positively, to work with faith communities
- that it recognises the importance that faith communities have in both social and economic agenda for regeneration
- that *GONE* sees faith communities having a lead rôle in identifying issues and working with other organisations

**Questions and discussion** followed.

Paul Southgate, from chair, noted *CRC*'s current survey on social action in the region, and what would be a directory of social action; and, from 15 May 2006, that *CRC* is receiving Home Office funding to help support faith communities' engagement with local authorities.

**Government funding of faith organisations:** how and where is it possible? RS explained that infrastructure could be funded: activity purely related to religious activity cannot - ie only where faith communities related to the broader community indirectly.

**Information from local authorities** about the many new initiatives was often not circulated: how can faith communities keep abreast? RS listed some of the most important websites where up-to-date information can be found:

- Home Office, 'Cohesion and Faith'  
[ <http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith/community-cohesion> ]
- *GONE*, 'Community Cohesion Network'  
[ [go-ne.gov.uk/gone/peopleandsustcoms/community\\_cohesion/](http://go-ne.gov.uk/gone/peopleandsustcoms/community_cohesion/) ]
- Office of Deputy Prime Minister [now [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) ]
- National Audit, 'Community Audit in Regeneration' [ [nao.org.uk](http://nao.org.uk) ]

**'Engagement'** - some uncertainty about what this term *means*. RS commented that it depends on circumstances - but *GONE* encourages communities to work together. The important part of 'engagement' is the partnership approach of working together to identify the 'what' and 'how' of agenda.

**Aim and outcome**, it was commented from the audience, are often difficult to identify. RS replied, 'as long as you build consensus, and don't do it on your own - *that's* cohesion,' and went on to underline the importance of an area base.

'**Community of Practice**' was suggested to be distinct from '*community of identity*', and an important distinction for faith communities.

'**Representation**/'**Advisory**' - a question from the audience about more precise definition. RS commented that *GONE* is not prescriptive about which rôle faith communities should take - but that it is important for faith communities to engage at the strategic level as well as the local.

From the audience again, it was observed that at this strategic level 'in-groups' can exclude faith communities' participation. A continuing problem, but faith communities' breadth of contact was wider than most 'strategists' could reach.

**Core-funding needed to continue organisational maintenance** while delivering Government targets. RS replied that voluntary/community organisations are good at delivering services, but not at costing them. Public authorities need to be more aware themselves of this. There is, however, only so much funding, and needs not to be fragmented (he noted an example of youth service in Sunderland - a *consortium* of small organisations had been able to recover full costs of contract). And finally, organisations need to become familiar with the processes of commissioning and negotiation.

**FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** - D<sup>r</sup> Doreen Finneron, Executive Director, *Faith-based Regeneration Network (FbRN)* [see presentation slides, Appendix 2]

The FbR Network was established in 2002: its membership drawn from across nine faiths. A support network ('...because it's *lonely work* ...'), it also acts as a channel of communication at policy level. DF began by offering a defining statement of core value for community development -

*"The right of each person to participate in the decisions that affect their lives – and to flourish in that participation."*

What then followed, she explained, would deal with both challenges and opportunities for faith-based organisations. These are **external**: to do with relations with the wider community, with other sectors; and **internal** - within the particular faith community, or within faith communities more generally.

**Externally**, such challenges and opportunities stem from -

- a sudden high profile, particularly with Government's interest in faith communities for two principal reasons: service delivery by the voluntary/community sector; and *governability* - 'keeping the lid on', maintaining stability. DF disclaimed cynicism in making this analysis - 'they're perfectly legitimate concerns for government'. But for faith communities, it is equally legitimate to consider how and to what extent they co-operate.
- a 'bandwagon effect'. DF noted Government's exploration of the faith 'area' - eg the Home Office's *Faith Communities Consultative Council*, actually Government Departments talking to each other *about* faith communities (with some indication that there was confusion between 'race' and 'faith'). The Institute of Public Policy Research, too, had organised a 'Faith Seminar', somewhat in a vacuum.

So faith communities are again on the radar. But if there is a bandwagon, who is steering it?

**Some Forces and Factors**

- 'partnerships' have become desirable: but what do faith communities bring to them? What is their rôle? (and faith communities, as desirable partners, can afford to be choosy ...)
- 'social capital' has become an accepted concept ('relationships matter'). Three kinds of social capital were identified - bonding (between similar); linking; and bridging. A question - how much do faith groups contribute other than in bonding? Recent Rowntree Foundation research<sup>1</sup> suggested that they offered a lot.

**Nature of Challenge and Opportunity** suggested DF:

- the impact of this broader value system on faith communities' own critical, analytical processes. There is a need to remember 'why we are here' - to engage with wider society, and fulfil a 'prophetic rôle'
- a need, therefore, to develop reflective *practice*
- and a need to consider how faith communities can develop a culture that centres on growing and learning, rather than on the competitive.

**Internal challenges** relate to -

- a question of the nature of representation and accountability: to which there are no ready answers.
- similarly, of leadership: it may be that faith communities can provide this. But how does it relate to the traditional leadership within faith communities?
- helping faith communities themselves to understand better the nature of community development: to make community development less marginal in faith communities (community development workers in faith communities are themselves isolated - and marginalised)
- and the use of community development values in faith communities: equal opportunities, the place of women and gay people, the protection of the vulnerable

And there are **risks**:

- in explaining or translating faith to those outside the faith community
- in being reflective and analytical: particularly in asking questions, asking 'who benefits'?
- in accepting that mistakes will be made.

But we should look towards celebration and flourishing.

**Discussion and questions** -

- 'governance' and 'governability' are ends of the same spectrum
- 'community' is not rosy: and how are we to negotiate around difficult areas of community development, eg work around single issues? DF commented that it is necessary to start where people are: Government is looking for neat answers, moreover - but 'it's messy down there'.
- concern that the Christian tradition is dominant: but what about other faiths? Will they, for example, take on a 'prophetic' rôle? Responding, DF commented that the real coming together is the point beyond talking: it is *working* together. Nonetheless, there is a need to work on mutual comprehension at a theological level.

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<sup>1</sup> *Faith and Social Capital, JRF findings* 0136 (March 2006) ; and see also - *Engaging Faiths in Urban Regeneration, findings* 413 (April 2003) [ [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk) ]

- an issue about the rôle of the faith community in, for example, Local Strategic Partnerships as part of the voluntary/community sector. It should be careful about how far it can assume a leadership rôle: especially where the procedures are better understood by Anglican than by other faiths.

**'ROUND TABLE' DISCUSSIONS** took place during the break which followed.

An informal briefing paper circulated, to give some structure to discussion.

It noted that while many faith communities contribute significantly to community development and regeneration, new demands are being made - in implementing 'community policies' nationally, regionally, locally: and in rural as well as urban settings. And yet public bodies often do not understand faith communities, even while making these demands. So -

- how can faith communities meet these challenges?
- how well is faith-based activity understood, by public bodies and wider society?
- how can faith communities from different traditions work with each other?
- what do public bodies want from faith communities?
- how do government policies and programmes support support faith community development?
- can faith communities contribute to/influence policy-making and programmes?

**Feedback** on discussion -

### ***Meeting challenges ...***

- faith communities have to decide what they *want* : but also need to be clear what they have to *give*.

- they have to find ways of making things happen, rather than wait upon other agenda - or waiting for funding (is the current 'business drift' of voluntary/community organisation dangerous?)

- 'what *is* a "faith community"? Are we comfortable with the designation?'

Some concern was expressed about the messages such language put out, and the implication of an institutional aspect. Comment in response - is this just a way of creating joint language?

- there is a need for faith communities to *create* (not just assume) a relationship with the wider community.

- problem of definition, of *being* defined, creates a problem too for funding (a guidance document was noted, using 'faith *group*' as the term - and with accompanying problems of labelling, and of prescribing styles of governance)

### ***How well are faith communities understood...?***

- not well: there is, especially, often confusion between 'religion' and 'race'.

- 'we don't, in general, understand those different from ourselves.'

### ***How can diverse faith communities work with each other?***

- by accepting differences.

- a need to accept the *newness* of the game. It takes longer at the beginning, because assumptions that 'we know' prove premature. And doing things in partnership takes longer than beginning to do them on our own.

- 'extreme' sectarianism can create an internal barrier for a faith community to engage in interfaith activity. Total inclusivity may be an aim, but it is unlikely to be a starting point

- and also, the demand for partnership can be impossible to meet in a given timescale (Rob Strachan commented on the implications this could have for neighbourhood renewal ...)

### ***Faith communities and Government policies/programmes***

(Rob Strachan commented, following an earlier point, that infrastructure should be determined in a collaborative way by the community, rather than prescribed by government. And that any timeline needs to take account of community confidence in engaging with the political process and with public bodies.)

- initiatives and funding can themselves *divide* (eg where renewal funding goes to one side of the road, but not to the other)

- community development in the North East has been determined by the priorities of elected members: note for example, the style of regeneration adopted in the earlier 2000s. Faith communities have the opportunities to create a new style of community development - but do they have the capacity and the 'literacy'?

### ***'Round table' conclusion - moving agenda forward***

Summarising discussion so far, Paul Southgate noted the clear need not to work in isolation. Faith communities can be more proactive by seeing how they fit into the wider pattern: and becoming more confident. Capacity building, especially, is important.

### **WORKSHOPS - for reports, see Appendix 1**

#### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS - Paul Southgate**

Reflecting on the day, PS reminded participants about Doreen Finneron's presentation - its account of community development, and the continuing problem of defining 'community' in terms of 'identity'. Could the purpose of community development be to create just that sense of identity?

He drew comparisons between the concept of social capital, and William Temple Foundation report outlining a similar concept of spiritual/religious capital.

Finally, he noted a point made earlier in the day - that faith communities have an opportunity to develop new kinds of community development.

*Jim Robertson on behalf of CDNE responded with thanks to CRC for taking the opportunity to organise the conference. He invited participants to keep in contact with CDNE and CRC. CRC and other organisations such as CCWA – Churches Community Work Alliance have a special interest in supporting those in faith groups who are engaging in community development work. In some situations the support is more formalised into courses and learning programmes and he again, he invited the gathering to make contact with CRC about such concerns and aspects.*

## **PART 2 - EVALUATION: SUMMARY AND LESSONS**

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### **INTRODUCTION/EXPLANATION**

*Faith Makes Community Grow* was the most recent of a series of North East regional conferences sponsored by *Community Development North East* (ie funded by CDNE through, in turn, funding received from Home Office)

Implicit objectives of this conference, therefore, can be identified as -

- setting community development in and on the part of faith communities/faith community organisations in context. 'Context' in this case is that of current (and emerging) agenda set by Government for voluntary/community organisation<sup>2</sup>
- providing examples, of practice and the experience of a variety of regional faith communities; of different kinds of issue around which they concentrate their activity. And providing an opportunity to explore these.
- highlighting the appropriateness - and need - for community development training in this broad area of practice.

There are four sets of information to evaluate a conference of this kind -

- the 'checklist' from evaluation sheets completed by participants
- the additional, qualitative comments from the same sheets
- unprompted comments from participants in the course of conversation (and blatant eavesdropping)
- participant observation on the reporter's/evaluator's own part.

This evaluation looks at the conference in terms of -

- **setting and experience** of the conference
- its **content and progress**
- specific issues and **themes**

### **SETTING AND EXPERIENCE**

Responses to each component of the event, from the 29 completed evaluation forms (*just under 50% of the 62 attending*) are summarised in the table over page. As a starting point, such forms are invaluable - and so a plea is entered here for participants in *any* conference to complete and return at the end of the day...

Evaluation form responses tell their own story, of immediate reactions. Firstly, the larger proportion of respondents felt satisfied or highly satisfied with speakers and workshop sessions; and in the same way, commenting on 'day as a whole', very much the larger proportion rated various aspects *good* or *very good*.

It is worth noting the number who rated as *very good*, particularly, the opportunities for networking. Additional comments both on the returned forms and during the day approved of the 'round table discussion' format - a leisurely coffee break with a briefing schedule for rather less leisurely discussion. It was clear that participants both put in and gained much from

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<sup>2</sup> 'Voluntary/community *organisation*' is here used deliberately, in preference to 'sector', to avoid implying any kind of institutional identity. It echoes a point raised during this conference discussions, *viz* that it feels *wrong* and unhelpful to skim over a real variety of practice.

<b>EVALUATION FORMS - SUMMARY TABLE</b> (n =29)					
	<i>v. good</i>	<i>good</i>	<i>fair</i>	<i>poor</i>	
<b>1. View of 'day as a whole'</b>					
- usefulness	8	19	2	-	
- enjoyment	5	19	5	-	
- met expectations	4	17	7	-	
- networking opportunities	11	17	1	-	
<b>2. Event organisation</b>					
- prior information	4	16	7	1	
- start time	7	17	2	-	
- finish time	6	21	2	-	
-date/day	7	21	2	-	
- overall organisation	6	23	-	-	
<b>3. Venue</b>					
- accessibility	4	18	6	-	
- special needs	4	11	4	1	'n/a' = 6
- refreshments	9	17	3	1	
- parking	2	8	7	1	'n/a' = 10
- location	5	16	6	-	
<b>4. Content</b>					
- speakers	8	13	2	-	
- workshops*	12	8	1	-	

\* workshop evaluations have been aggregated: many respondents clearly evaluated 'speakers-and-workshop', or did not specify which workshop attended.

this approach - although some said there were initial difficulties in joining in (comments drawn both from forms, and through the day).

*Enjoyment* is perhaps difficult to quantify *and* to qualify - but responses on form, comments during the day, and reaction observed during the day clearly showed satisfaction and more. Underlying this, it suggests, is the point made by Doreen Finneron during her presentation: that those engaged in communitydevelopment, especially (?) in faith communities, occupy an isolated position. And at the least, it can be said that the conference fulfilled the function of creating a sense of connexion with both colleagues and current issues.

To complete this initial overview: venue (the Unitarian Church premises in Ellison Place, close by Mia House and the Newcastle university quarter of the city centre) was rated as *good/very good* by substantially the largest proportion of form-respondents. Nonetheless, a number had reservations both about its actual accessibility (*viz* particularly, the cost of carparking - a small point, except for those travelling in from outside major urban centres of communication, from less well-funded organisations, or self-funded participants).

Comments were also made (and it could be observed) that seminar space for workshops was variable in quality and accessibility. One response rated 'special needs' provision as *poor* - but unfortunately did not make more

specific comment: and other comments were made about poor acoustics and/or public address system during plenary sessions.

### CONTENT AND PROGRESS

Both invited speakers and workshops were well-received by participants (see again, table above). In more detail, and from observation and discussion with participants during coffee and lunch breaks, balance of time allocated during the day *and* of way in which presentations ran (*ie* allowing discussion after each speaker's presentation) was right. Details are important on such occasions - and as a principle, it is suggested, allowing sufficient time in the day's agenda for immediate follow-up discussion is useful. It not only keeps in focus issues important to participants, but also acknowledges that they *are* participants rather than passive consumers.

It also suggests that in this respect, planning of the day's agenda got it right - too many speakers crowds out the possibility of participation, and can cloud the conference's focus.

There was balance, too, in the speakers' material. Rob Strachan set out the current Government agenda in which community/voluntary organisation plays an important part; rôles and relationships of Government departments; the 'challenges' and implicit expectations of faith communities from Government and public bodies.

Doreen Finneron, meanwhile, critically examined similar ground from the point of view of faith communities - and particularly, of those involved as community development practitioners *in* faith communities. And pointed out that faith communities had a choice of *where* and *whether* they were involved in such agenda.

Broad comment was made - again, both on evaluation forms and during the day - that during these presentations and elsewhere, there was heavy reliance on 'technical language', 'jargon' (and similar terms: an accusation which this report itself will, probably, not escape ...). Some comments of this kind were directed particularly at the *GONE* presentation (and also, incidentally, criticised the focus on 'what is' to the exclusion of alternative possibilities of policy - in the way in which Government thought and acted).

This suggests -

- the importance (and difficulty) of dealing with this area of activity, without obscure language; of not assuming that every participant is familiar with current policy 'buzzwords'; of not assuming that these terms have the same meaning for everyone involved
- that more attention generally needs to be paid to ensuring that whatever is the subject of discussion and negotiation in strategic/policy circles, is understood by those routinely *outside* such circles. In short, that those working in the field (or in the street ...) are able to equip themselves with the same tools of language: at the very least, so they are not left without the means to meet policymakers or similar, on equal ground.

As commented earlier, evaluation form comments on **workshops** rarely identified a specific workshop. And the number of workshops meant that it was not possible to observe each workshop for more than a token amount of time while this part of the day took place. This must always create a dilemma for conference planners: and indeed some comment was received on this point - *viz* that it would have been preferable to have had longer 'workshop' session,

so that more than workshop could be attended (this point is raised as a marker, rather than a criticism: since these comments also went hand in hand with appreciation of 'round table discussion' - choices have to be made...).

In general, however, both from evaluation forms and from comments afterwards, workshops were well received, and attendances at each workshop suggested that planning choices of workshops were thoughtfully made - a balance between accounts of specific practice (*viz*, from Middlesbrough, and South Tyneside), and more general issue-based workshops. It's perhaps appropriate and significant that these latter drew some enthusiastic comments: noting especially that during day-to-day work, it was often difficult to gain or retain much broad perspective.

### **THEMES (LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS in no particular order)**

Beginning specifically with Doreen Finneron's presentation (but always an undercurrent in conferences of this kind), there was an underlying sense of awareness of the isolation of community development workers; and in this case of how potentially important yet currently marginal community development is in faith communities. As such, it was clearly important *that* this conference took place, and evident that the largest proportion of what was, after all, a large attendance drew something valuable to themselves from it. Indeed, a number of comments like, 'this should be done again' were made. One specifically suggested as a focus the new *Faithful Cities* report.

As so often is the case with any conference focusing on community development, there is a question about 'reach' and attendance. That is, how many participants are volunteers, are *from* communities rather than in some way professional? In this case, there was an additional dimension, acknowledged implicitly in one part of discussion where some concern was expressed about the domination of *Christian* faith-based participation in dialogue with public bodies.

One respondent on evaluation form commented on the almost complete absence of other than members of Christian faith communities. While it is certainly the case that among the general population in the North East, proportions of that population from the various *BEM* communities are low compared with, *eg* Yorkshire or the Midlands, there seem grounds for investigating means of broader circulation of information (for example?) combined with more personal contact with those faith communities not represented in this conference.

From workshop sessions, it seemed clear that there is an appetite, a need, for the opportunity to deal in some detail with 'minority' areas of activity.

At a different level, the problem of shared language was always in evidence - not least from audience comment and discussion. Not just a problem of language and mutual understanding, but of what it implies for voluntary/community organisation in its relationship with public/government bodies.

Two issues of terminology seemed particularly prominent during this conference - 'engage': what is it to be 'engaged' (*does it differ from 'involved'?*); and 'infrastructure' - implying an underlying assumption that 'sectors' have a semi-formal structure, and prominent in current Government policy. There was comment on this from participants during presentations; overheard discussion during roundtable and break times; and similar discussion will be familiar from similar gatherings and conferences.

Within the span of a single day, it was always going to be difficult to focus both on the nature of important issues, and the possibilities of community development training to improve practical effectiveness in relevant work. If *Faith makes Communities Work* was part of a series of conferences intended to highlight training and its possibilities, the message was at least camouflaged ...

Given the nature and experience of the conference, *viz* a sense that participants drew some encouragement, sustenance and perspective on what they were doing, it could yet prove effective *subliminal* promotion for a considered approach to, programme of, community development training.

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## APPENDIX 1 - WORKSHOP REPORTS

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### WORKSHOP 1: SOUTH TYNESIDE FAITH COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Bernadette Askins

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#### ***Background to directory***

Concept developed summer 2005 - two organisations were independently considering issue.

- i) Local authority surveying community facilities but realised that there should be reference to faith based facilities.
- ii) Churches Together had already done some work but information was incomplete and needed to be revisited.

From a chance meeting the concept of a partnership was considered and subsequently developed.

Questionnaires were sent out and personal contacts made. Information was then compiled and published. Directory was launched in March 2006. LA funded the work and published the directory.

Directory was based upon the 6 Community Action Forums already established in South Tyneside.

#### ***Difficulties/issues***

Some difficulties in establishing partnership as it was not equal. LA insisted that all letters sent out should be on its letterhead and signed by leader of the council.

Definition of 'faith organisation' also not clear. Also, only organisations with premises could be included in the directory ie the LA was keen to have a directory of 'facilities' rather than organisations. (LA's agenda at odds with *Churches Together's*)

Both groups were inexperienced of working with each other and there was a knowledge gap which resulted in each group making assumptions about the other and how they worked.

Lack of volunteer resources

Capacity to respond (CT could have benefited from full time workers to establish and maintain contacts)

#### ***Funding***

LA Development Fund, but only available till March 06. This proved a difficulty as it imposed a tight deadline. In hindsight, this should have been clarified at start of project.

LA £4 ½ k, Stride £1k, CT £300, NECT £300 (200 reports produced)

Directory provides information that has never previously been available or easily accessible. Eg number and range of facilities, how many users, activities available, areas available.

LA used this information to ensure that there was not duplication of activities and facilities in any area. (w/shop member asked if the LA's agenda was to be able to close its own facilities and use other organisation's thus saving money)

### ***Benefits to wider community***

- Info all in one directory
- Premises in almost every area identified
- Details accessible
- Contact details
- Benefits to faith communities

### ***Benefits to Funding Organisations***

- Full range of facilities visible
- Information about CAFs given
- Publicity
- Possible income generated by increased attendances
- Possible growth
- Makes resources visible

***Feedback*** has been positive but in hindsight should have included info about services of worship. (but not part of LA's agenda)

Should have had more meetings with LA to resolve problems.

Work was not given sufficient priority by LA (but realise that this was only part of officers overall workload)

***Future*** directory will be placed on the LA web site and be updated.

### ***Other issues to consider***

- Assessing how many people have used the directory (possibly need feedback from individual organisation) thereby getting a measure of success.
- Inclusion of organisations without premises
- May be a way in to interfaith work.

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## ***WORKSHOP 2: MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL OF FAITHS - Sheelin Kilroy, Vice-chair Middlesbrough Council of Faiths***

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*To begin with, SK introduced the card game Diversity, intended to stimulate discussion/comparison between cultures: from Suffolk Interfaith Resource [sifre.org.uk] or at [www.festivalshop.co.uk](http://www.festivalshop.co.uk)*

### ***MCF aims to -***

- develop good community relationships
- promote understanding and respect between people of different faiths in the more than 80 different centres of worship in the town
- enable people of faith to work together on issues of common interest
- provide a means for faith communities to play a full part in local decision-making through Middlesbrough Community Network and Middlesbrough Partnership

### ***Origins***

As part of the Government's strategy to consult and involve faith communities in the decision-making for local areas, Middlesbrough Community Network took the initiative to establish a faith communities' network in the town (the community/voluntary sector makes its input to Middlesbrough Strategic

Partnership through Middlesbrough Community Network). With Cleveland Interfaith Group, about 40 representatives of faith communities in Middlesbrough visited Leicester Council of Faiths.

Following that, an open meeting was held in April 2005 (having had some support from GONE, after initial barriers from the Local Authority) from which a multi-faith development group was appointed. In addition, the London bombings provided some spur to pursuing the project.

There are more than 80 places of worship in Middlesbrough, which has one of the highest proportions of people of black and ethnic minorities, and of faiths other than Christian, in the North East. Members of the development group represented Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths - Christian representatives were Anglican, Quaker, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army.

### **Progress and development**

Representation was discussed at serious length. Representatives on the development group recommended that the Council of Faiths should have 9 Christian representatives, 6 Muslim, 3 Hindu, 3 Sikh - plus one representative from any other faith groups wishing to participate.

To ensure as equal participation as possible, it was also recommended that in the larger groups, of three representatives there should be at least one male, one female so that no faith group is represented either by all males or all females.

In addition to groups already mentioned, there are two representatives from Cleveland Interfaith Group, *SACRE* and Tees Valley Faith Communities Regeneration Group - to learn from and develop work done in recent years. *In February of this year - 2006* - the elected Middlesbrough Council of Faiths met for the first time: public meetings and elections had been held through December 2005 and January 2006, so that two representatives from *MCF* could be selected for the Local Strategic Partnership.

### **Achievements to date**

- Premises: office, library/quiet room, conference room in Conference House - opposite Town Hall in Middlesbrough
- Grants totalling £50,000 from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, £5,000 from Neighbourhood Support Fund, £5,160 Start Up from Community Chest
- website - [www.middlesbroughfaiths.org.uk](http://www.middlesbroughfaiths.org.uk)
- 2 representatives elected to the Local Strategic Partnership
- Administrative worker (appointed 3 May )
- Women's Initiative set up
- Young People's Initiative set up
- Interaction with (opposition to) Mayor's proposal for a regional/super casino (Government propose 1 super -, 8 regional and 8 small casinos nationally)

**" A positive way of linking refugees with employers and promoting mutual understanding - a 'win/win' situation"**

**What does *RISE* involve?**

- transitional employment/sheltered work environment
- unemployed or underemployed refugees
- paid suitable and sustainable work placements
- placements matched to skills, experience, qualifications
- learning opportunities
- jobsearch support
- personal support

**Why is *RISE* needed?**

- 36% unemployment rate
- specific barriers to work
- need relevant and realistic work situations, and opportunity to prove themselves
- skills shortages
- remove negative perceptions of employing refugees

**Who is involved?**

- *RISE's* working contacts -
- Northern Rock Foundation & Jobcentre Plus
- referral agencies
- learning providers
- employers
- refugees
- refugee organisation
- other organisations

**What happened ...**

***Phase 1 - working with 29 refugees -***

- 60% into permanent employment by end of project
- 95% benefited from learning opportunities
- at least 65% now in work

***Phase 2 - started November 2004:***

- 30 refugees
- 75% into employment

**Funders**

***Phase 1***

- European Social Fund (with equal-matched funding)
- Northern Rock Foundation

## **Phase 2**

- Northern Rock Foundation
- Home office European Refugee Fund
- Jobcentre Plus New Deal Employer Subsidy

## **Phase 3**

- Northern Rock Foundation
- Home Group Ltd
- Jobcentre Plus New Deal Employer Subsidy
- Job Linkage Sunderland
- Included Communities
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Garfield Weston Foundation

## **Some Examples ...**

### **'Angelino'**

- from Angola (*SW Africa*): Portuguese-speaking, previously working as driver, and in the army. Wanted to work as fork-lift truck driver. Placement at large furniture hypermarket, and training in basic computer skills.
- now employed with that hypermarket

### **'William'**

- ran a call-centre in the Congo: placement with local housing association
- now employed with housing association as trainee housing officer

### **'Prisca'**

- worked as manicurist, hairdresser, and care worker in Zimbabwe
- wanted to be classroom assistant for learners with additional support needs
- placement at Sunderland school: completed NVQ2 for Classroom Assistants
- employment at specialised charity's school in Tyne and Wear

***' We feel very privileged and grateful to have had this opportunity ... found it a useful experience to have someone with different values and ways of looking at the world than we would otherwise have had'***

**Discussion** began with questions -

what are main barriers to employment for refugees

how does a project such as *RISE* help to overcome these barriers?

what can you do?

- and ended with listed barriers -

- language/dialect
- lack of knowledge of recruitment process
- lack of knowledge of UK work practices
- qualifications not recognised in UK
- lack of support structures
- lack of money
- no bank account
- no network or contacts

- skills not recognised
- CRB checks
- no references
- childcare
- lack of knowledge of local area
- new school
- 'weather'
- benefits trap
- lack of opportunity
- lack of information
- lack of confidence
- emotional/psychological problems
- prejudice/safety
- cultural differences
- health
- family problems
- housing
- isolation

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#### **WORKSHOP 4: PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNER-SHIPS**

Fr Gerry Lee

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- Govt. Guidance suggests that Faith Communities should act as Advisers and not be Representatives on *LSPs* but there is no consistency across country.
- The workshop facilitator is a 'Delegated Representative' of Churches Together.
- Christians have been excluded from sitting on some *LSPs* because it was felt that they needed to be representative of ALL Faith communities.
- There is a yearning for discussion of the 'spirituality' of issues – where is people's sense of passion?
- Role of Faith Community representative is to ask awkward questions.
- Faith Community representatives should be able to articulate the real feelings of people in the room/community and add 'grist to the mill', without fear of repercussions i.e. not restricted because of job role.
- Faith Community reps have a 'Prophetic role'– they can comment on the world in which we live.
- However there must be a balance between being purely prophetic (and getting peoples backs up) & simply being 'engaged' i.e. having a place at the table but not being effective.
- Model of 'church' or Faith Community: '*Communion*' (active membership of a faith community) for the sake of '*Mission*' (Making an impact on the world for good)
- What difference do we make to the world by being a people of faith?
- The challenge for Faith Communities is to be the glue/thread to bind together disparate parts of our lives.
- Faith Communities need to be seen to make things happen in their communities to be credible.
- Don't underestimate the number of people Faith Communities can communicate with.

- Should Faith Communities be at the table as a distinctive group or should they be part of a wider Community Network?
- If Faith communities are to participate effectively in LSP's: Where do we get the expertise? Where do we get the energy?

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**WORKSHOP 5: FAITH COMMUNITIES IN A RURAL SETTING** - Rev. Les Hann  
Weardale Methodist Church

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*The workshop presentation looked at some of the current major problems for those living in rural areas, the place of church and faith-based groups in rural communities, examples of projects and action by faith-based organisation: and some difficulties in supporting such initiatives, with solutions that have been explored.*

Rural stress has always existed, but foot and mouth epidemic made it more acute.

Faith-based groups - usually Christian - are a feature of rural communities. They start with the advantage of coming regularly together, of having premises, and of a volunteering culture.

***Some examples of projects set up/run by faith-based communities -***

- *Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Services*, set up to help isolated farmers cope both with that isolation, and with bureaucracy

- *Angels & Advocates*, church social action in Yorkshire and Humberside

It is, however, difficult to find funding for 'traditional' initiatives. An urban survey surprised researchers with the scale of faith-based organisation. Funds for rural investigation are now available - *Sowing the Seed, Church and Rural Renaissance*.

However, when the church in Weardale employed a detached youth worker, this was funded by local charities and well-wishers - quicker and surer than going for Government funding.

A police bus was used as a means of promoting work - this arrangement lasted for 3½ years, ending when they had gone as far as possible and funding ceased.

***Buildings - problems and solutions***

When the Methodist Chapel in Weardale closed, it was thought better to look at its use as social housing rather than to sell on the open market. Methodist Church authorities advised however that a housing project would go against Charity Commissioners' rules. Ideas are being explored legally to avoid these restrictions (*as, for example, the Byker Bridge Housing Project*)

Otherwise, former church buildings are rented to local businesses - but need to be advertised on the open market.

***Churches and young people***

One of the greatest difficulties in a rural setting is the loss of young people - both for community in general and for the church. Accommodation, employment, leisure activities/entertainment - all these are factors leading to young people leaving such areas.

Older people, meanwhile, 'retire' from volunteering, expecting younger people to take over their place - but this is less and less likely. At the same time, farmers are having to work harder, for longer hours to make ends meet: and have less free time to give even to their own families.

The church has, in the main, the good will of the community. They have also tended to make eg church halls available for social activities.

*Hidden Britain Centres*, involving churches, agricultural colleges and the Arthur Rank Centre, is a way of developing hidden places, amenities for the benefit of the local community controlled to remain unspoiled and with numbers of visitors agreed with the local community.

Youth workers in rural settings probably need to be connected with churches. Young people nowadays are less likely to accept traditional organisation, unless in the younger age-range.

An example of the problem experienced by young people - congregating at the local bus-shelter. This proves too visible, and chased away from there, they now meet at the back of the chapel. This is dark and out of sight. And drug abuse is always to be found.

There is a need, ideally, for a 'safe' building with organisers on hand for social activities. Because of their history of 'social' use, church buildings are not a problem for young people themselves, to use. But any resistance from congregation and others will cause young people to turn their back - and no second chance will be available.

Otherwise, after-school activities are available, but parents have to arrange transport afterwards. *Transport is a major problem.*

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**WORKSHOP 6: GENDER AND GENERATION** - Catherine Duce and Shamila Ahmed, *Research Associates*, "Young People and Faith in the North East", *Durham University*

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*The "Young People and Faith in the North East" project at Durham University is a two-year research project (2005-2007) working actively with young people to better understand how faith communities involve and support young people within local communities. Local Churches, Mosques, Synagogues, Gurdwara, Temples are key community resources, often providing the only long-term commitment to areas. However, the scope and potential of their work to involve young people in the wider community is not yet fully understood, particularly in the North East of England.*

**Project aims (by June 2007) are:**

- *To better understand how faith communities engage with young people aged 11-18*
- *To explore how young people feel about participating in projects run by faith communities and how they experience being members of a faith community, through the help of Action Teams*
- *To share stories of successful practice of working with young people within/across faith communities and training young people in DVD production for widespread dissemination*
- *To influence the training of youth workers and faith leaders by improving cultural competence*
- *To increase intergenerational understanding and community cohesion*

### **The workshop set out to question:**

- How can faith communities from diverse traditions work with each other?
- What are the barriers?
- What are the underlying motivations for greater inclusion of young people in faith communities?

### **Significant findings from the project so far include:**

1. Delivery of **good youth work depends** on the **personality and values of the youth worker**
2. **Inter-faith work can't be imposed.** All personal identities need to be problematised before critical dialogue and interfaith work can be introduced. Above all, this must include recognition of the dominant "white" monoculture in UK, especially the North East
3. According to young people the best way for inter-faith understanding to increase is to **unpack\_faith debates within an inclusive "project"** or "activity" using the **commonality of being a young person** as a spring board. They stress that dialogue does take place informally
4. There is a need for greater staff **training/supervision in cultural competence** through reflective practice and there is huge lack of communication amongst different practitioners
5. Youth interfaith forums must be facilitated to **ensure critical dialogue occurs**
6. If we are to achieve greater levels of social justice, equality, mutual respect, diversity, then **there is a need for radical social change.** We can't afford to be afraid of being political.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Taking the issue of either 'gender' or 'generation', what is the greatest frustration you have with your faith community?
2. In what ways might young people [and women] be empowered to participate more fully in faith communities and wider society?

### **Discussion noted -**

- People's discomfort with sharing
- Lack of listening
- Leadership issues
- Lack of interest from young people
- Lack of tolerance
- Barrier of literacy
- Misrepresentations of young people
- Alienation
- Language

### **Main points of general discussion:**

- Issue with segregated faith schools. Children mix in the street and play together and faith is not an issue.
- How do we get the faith leaders to listen to young people and women?
- On talking to the Middlesbrough Council of Faiths, told that there is a need to get into the Local Authorities and talk to people making funding decisions re youth work.
- One church leader shared their premises with a Muslim group and this made people think about practices and misconceptions.
- The issue is between churches and not between faiths.

- The need to pool resources between faith communities – it improves the quality of provision and breaks down barriers.
- The teaching about the major religions is important – way of dealing with ignorance and integration – intolerance comes from fear of the unknown.
- In many Christian churches there is a definite pattern of only a few people speaking to the assembly and making the decisions ('wisdom flows in one direction'). It is difficult to work against that pattern and the basic cultural things about the way we meet.
- Need to work to the pattern that everyone has a right to be heard and is of equal value
- How can we make faith leaders community development practitioners?

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## **APPENDIX 2 - PRESENTATION SLIDES**

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## The important role that faith can play in the development of North East communities

Rob Strachan  
Head of Communities Policy  
Government Office for the North East

Government Office for the North East



## Role of the Government Office

- 9 GOs nationally working with 10 sponsor departments
- Working with communities and local partners to deliver PSAs and cross-governmental programmes
- Developing strong relationships at regional and local level
- Acting as an effective conduit between local/regional partners and central government
- Informing policy development and delivery

Government Office for the North East



## The policy environment

- "Increasing Opportunity, Strengthening Society", the National Strategy for Community Cohesion
- The future of local government: A 10 year vision (LAAs, CPA refresh for 2005, citizen engagement and public services: why neighbourhoods matter)
- The introduction of compact plus
- Modernisation of VCS infrastructure through ChangeUp and the handover of programme from GOs to "Capacitybuilders"
- Changes in funding for the VCS post 2006 (BLF, SRB wind up and European changes, Job Centre+, LSC and ONE)
- The creation of a Third Sector Finance Unit in the Treasury and securing the input of the VCS into the Spending Review 2007

Government Office for the North East



## Engaging faith communities

Government Office for the North East



## Role and importance of faith communities

- There is a need to acknowledge the role of faith in advising public sector partners and representing communities
- We need to recognise the importance of faith groups in building bridges across communities, in tackling extremism, in promoting understanding, in bringing communities together and in identifying and responding to community tensions
- We need to encourage faith communities to work with and support other community sector infrastructure such as Community Empowerment Networks
- We need to recognise the unique role that faith communities can play in the community cohesion agenda
- We need to understand the role of faith communities as part of a wider VCS and avoid fragmentation
- Priority should be neighbourhoods, not bureaucracy

Government Office for the North East



## Experience so far across the region....

- Faith engagement in regional policy, for example, regional community cohesion learning network, the northern way
- At local level, significant individual contributions, though visibility varies across LSPs and in different ways e.g. Hartlepool, Sunderland
- Development of faith engagement infrastructure at varying stages across region, for example, Council of Faiths in Newcastle, development of Council of Faiths in Middlesbrough
- Mainstreaming of faith into existing infrastructure, for example, community networks

Government Office for the North East

### Some challenges for faith communities



- Raising awareness of the importance of faith communities
  - Helping partners understand the role that faith communities can play in LSPs
  - Helping partners develop an understanding of local communities and what challenges and opportunities that exist e.g. South Tyneside Faith Communities Directory
  - Helping local communities respond to a changing region in economic and social terms
  - Working with other communities of identity and place for the benefit of local areas
- Government Office for the North East

### Key messages



- We want to work with you to identify what works and what doesn't and to inform policy development at regional and national level
- GONE recognises that faith engagement is important to the economic and social future of the region and we encourage our partners to engage seriously in the agenda
- We want to see faith and wider communities play a lead role in identifying key issues and working with others to respond to the challenges in their local areas

Government Office for the North East

## Faith and Community Development

Challenges and Opportunities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Doreen Finneron FbRN: May 2006

## Community Development

It's about

- The right of each person to participate in the decisions that affect their lives – and to flourish in that participation

Doreen Finneron FbRN: May 2006

## Challenges and Opportunities

- | External  | Internal   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These are connected to our relationships with wider society and other sectors</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Located within our own faith community, or within the faith communities more widely.</li></ul> |

Doreen Finneron FbRN: May 2006

## External challenges and opportunities arise from

- Sudden high profile
- Government interest
  - service delivery
  - governability
- A faith 'bandwagon'
- Partnerships
- Concept of social capital

Doreen Finneron FbRN: May 2006

## Nature of the challenge and opportunity

- Value system
  - Why are we there?
  - Engagement and the prophetic role
- How do we develop and grow in reflective practice?
- How do we as faith communities help each other and develop a growing and learning culture and not a competitive one?

Doreen Finneron FbRN: May 2006

## Internal challenges and opportunities

- Representation and accountability
- Leadership
- Taking community development into our faith communities so it is less marginal
- Community development values; equal opportunities, the position of women and gay people, the protection of the vulnerable

Doreen Finneron FbRN: May 2006

- Risk, being open to challenge and bringing the whole of our faith into the engagement
- Partnerships
- Reflective
- Asking questions, particularly ‘who is benefiting?’
- Knowing we will make mistakes
- Celebration and flourishing

Doreen Finneron FbRN: May 2006