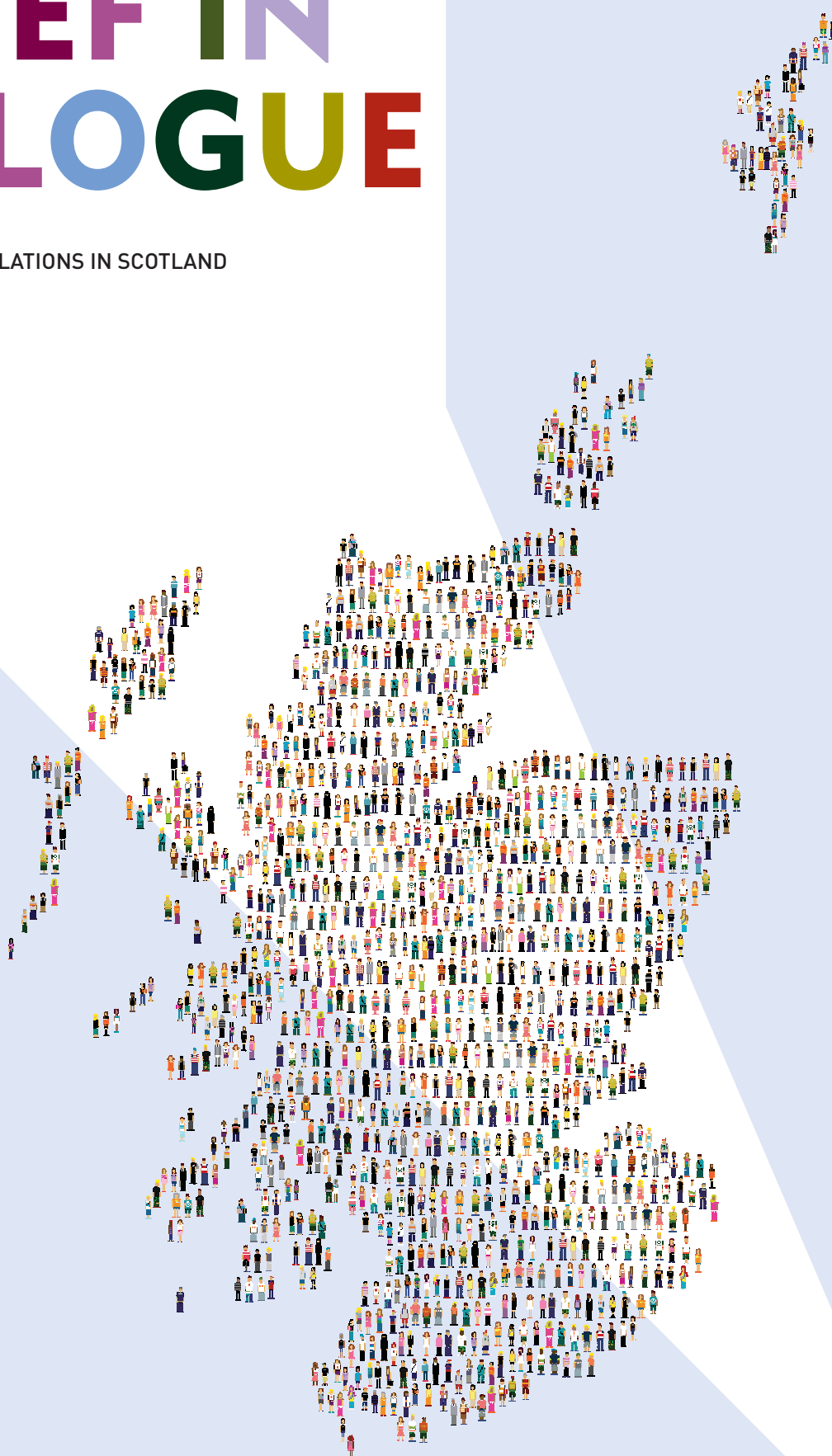# BELIEF IN DIALOGUE

RELIGION AND BELIEF RELATIONS IN SCOTLAND
GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

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scotland
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

BELIEF IN DIALOGUE

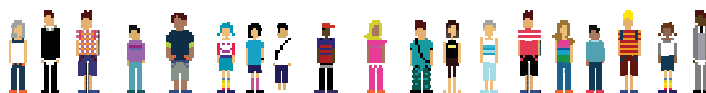RELIGION AND BELIEF RELATIONS IN SCOTLAND
GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

CONTENTS

1

CONTENTS

2

FOREWORD

By Fergus Ewing MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Community Safety

I believe in a Scotland built on the basic values of mutual trust, respect and understanding. A Scotland where everyone, regardless of background, can live and raise their families in peace and fulfil their potential by contributing what they can to the society that we all share. The basic building block for a society where everyone is valued is dialogue. Dialogue brings us together; removes the fear of the unknown; helps us to find common ground; builds friendships; and challenges the stigmatisation which holds back many individuals and communities. It also offers us the chance to embrace the full diversity of life, to have first-hand experience of cultures we did not grow up with, and to learn that there is more pulling people together than pulling them apart.

That is why any new document encouraging constructive dialogue should be positively welcomed. But this is a very particular kind of guidance document for dialogue. It is one which has the ultimate aim of encouraging constructive dialogue to take place between those who hold religious beliefs and those who hold non-religious beliefs. Such dialogue is vital if we are to live harmoniously together as a society and avoid the polarisation of opinion, the disenfranchisement of individuals and groups who feel their place in society is not valued or respected, and the isolation and vulnerability which leave people in fear of expressing their identity and beliefs.

Dialogue is not about winning arguments or converting others to your own beliefs. It is about providing platforms to discuss and explain different belief systems; to deepen our understanding of others' beliefs by questioning and challenging them in a non-confrontational way; and to learn about how different beliefs shape different peoples lives. It is only through dialogue that we will be able to learn about others, develop trust and respect for those who are different from ourselves and be able to live together in peace. Peaceful co-existence is a goal which is well worth aiming for and I commend this document to you.

Fergus Ewing MSP
Minister for Community Safety

3

INTRODUCTION

By Sister Isabel Smyth SND, Chair of the Scottish Working Group on Religion and Belief Relations

Scotland is a small and diverse country with many nationalities, cultures and beliefs. It is committed to social cohesion, justice and equality. This is exemplified by the inscription on the Scottish Mace which sits in the Scottish Parliament, clearly declaring to the world that our society is underpinned by the values of wisdom, justice, integrity and compassion. Since the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 there has been a renewed sense of Scottish identity with greater opportunities for civic engagement through increased levels of consultation and better access to decision makers. This level of involvement in the future of our country is to be encouraged.

Traditionally and historically Scotland has been a predominantly Christian society and, since the Reformation, predominantly Protestant. However, Scottish society has historically also been a diverse one with many minority beliefs having a long history of activity and membership in Scotland. Modern Scotland is a multi-belief and multi-cultural country with its citizens subscribing to a wide range of traditions and beliefs. Some of these are of a religious nature while others are more philosophical and expressed through life stances such as humanism. Within all these structures there is a diversity of opinion about beliefs and practices. There are also people with no organised affiliations. Nonetheless the beliefs of those who are not affiliated to any formal organisation can often be considered spiritual, frequently drawing on a diversity of religious and philosophical ideas although not within any institutional or organised framework.

All of the people of Scotland have the right to respect and to enjoy the freedom to participate in society with integrity and honesty. Within modern democracies equality cannot be achieved if all are not given a voice. Everyone has the right to express themselves but in a secular society which is open to the views and beliefs of all, it is even more important for communities and groups to listen to one another. This is particularly so when beliefs and values which are good in themselves clash, or when there are moments of tension which threaten to disrupt stability and undermine community cohesion.

Such tensions can be the result of different opinions about life, public policy or the consequence of global conflicts. Scots have put down roots and been welcomed around the globe. Many new Scots belong to minority faith communities that are closely tied to fellow adherents of their religions in other countries, so it is easy to see how international events, both positive and negative, can have a big impact on Scottish society. Indeed, it is important to be aware that UK and European foreign policy and legislation can affect communities in Scotland. In such circumstances dialogue, rooted in sincerity, honesty and openness becomes important.

It was to this end that the Scottish Government established the Scottish Working Group on Religion and Belief Relations in February 2008. This independent working group of individuals, with expertise in facilitating good relations through dialogue, was asked to look at how community cohesion could be supported through dialogue and positive
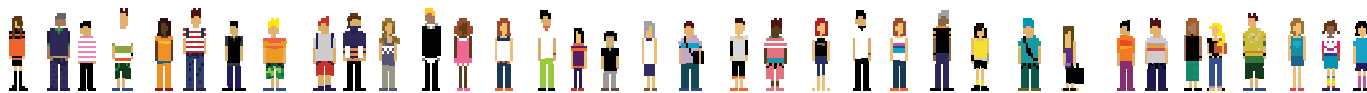
action among different faith communities and between faith communities and other belief groups. I am grateful to them for their commitment and contributions to this task.

The working group, in consultation with a wide variety of groups and individuals, considered the barriers which inhibit constructive and positive dialogue and agreed that the development of a Good Practice Guide would offer a tool to be used by different people in various contexts to help them create the safe spaces needed to allow that to take place. The Guide does three things:

- ■ It acknowledges that we are all part of a multi-cultural society which incorporates a variety of beliefs.

- ■ It recognises that we all share this society equally with equal rights and responsibilities.

- ■ It sets out ways to facilitate dialogue so that belief groups, whether religious or not, can work together constructively to make our society better for all of the people who live and work in 21st century Scotland.

This Good Practice Guide is intended for individuals, faith communities, belief groups, inter-faith groups, local authority equality officers as well as for statutory and voluntary organisations. In fact it is intended for all those interested in bringing together people of different beliefs to engage in dialogue and common action. It recognises the good practice already established in the field of inter-religious dialogue and the importance

of developing and deepening this activity. Moreover, it also recognises the importance of extending this dialogue to include people of non-religious beliefs as a foundation for good community relations and support in times of tension.

We encourage its use in a variety of ways and contexts to take good relations among people of diverse beliefs in Scotland to a new level.

Sister Isabel Smyth SND
Chair of the Scottish Working Group on Religion and Belief Relations

All of the people of Scotland, regardless of their beliefs, have the right to respect and must be allowed the freedom to participate in society with integrity and honesty.

INTRODUCTION

5

BACKGROUND
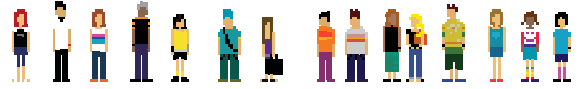
Religion and belief relations in Scotland

Religious and non-religious philosophical beliefs (referred to collectively as 'beliefs' throughout this guidance document) are often cited by individuals and organisations as providing the inspiration for their desire to act for the common good and make positive contributions to society that benefit all. But the same beliefs can also be misused to build barriers between people and communities; foster discrimination, inequality and conflict; reinforce stereotypes and fuel irrational fear and paranoia about those who are different from us. Such negative uses and interpretations only lead to fragmented communities living in fear and isolation. History has shown that in times of crisis, such as economic difficulties, rational thought can all too easily be lost to those who peddle prejudice and discrimination, creating scapegoats within communities for all of the societal problems we need to face and tackle together.

We must prevent the differences between people from undermining community cohesion and becoming the source of division which pulls our communities apart. It is important to find ways of communicating openly, respectfully and constructively with one another and of accepting and celebrating diversity. Dialogue and collaborative social action can harness the power of good within religious and non-religious people and groups to work towards harmony, peace and shared respect and understanding.

It is worth pausing here to look at what we mean by respect. When respect is mentioned in this document it is referring to the mutual respect, trust and understanding which should exist between all people and organisations to ensure that all of our dealings with each other take place in an open and honest way. The notion of treating others as you would like to be treated yourself is a very powerful one and a very good starting point for all of the dialogue we have with each other.

It is also worth making it clear from the outset that the dialogue which is needed to break down the barriers between our communities is not intended to water down beliefs, make everyone conform to or promote a single view of the world. The aim of this dialogue is in fact the very opposite. There is nothing wrong with difference, diversity and individuality – it is right that we should all be true to our beliefs. But we all need to recognise that we share our society and cannot allow our personal views to deny others the right to theirs.

The journey towards mutual respect and understanding is not always an easy one and often involves sustained conversations about difficult issues. Open and constructive dialogue needs to take place locally, nationally and internationally as we face the challenge of communicating across cultural, ideological, religious and philosophical boundaries and become ever more aware of our interdependence as global citizens.

At its core, dialogue is about relationships between people and not systems. Dialogue between communities needs to take place to promote understanding, break down prejudice and misunderstanding, reduce discrimination and foster collaborative social action.

Secular society

Modern Scottish society is secular, a description which is often misunderstood. And so it is worth considering what this actually means and how it impacts on the individual rights of people to follow their beliefs. Secularism is often defined as a doctrine that rejects religion and religious considerations and accepts the complete separation of religion from government. This is not the case in Scotland.

Secularism in modern Scotland is about creating a society of equals regardless of the beliefs of those within it. Laws created in Scotland, and by the Westminster and European Parliaments, support this by seeking to eliminate discrimination and protect the rights of individuals to express and practise their beliefs.

Most religious movements accept and support a secular, democratic society which allows them the freedom to practise their religious beliefs openly and without fear or recrimination from the state or any organisation, such as the police, working on behalf of the state. Within a secular society it is of course open to all organisations and groups to seek to influence political decisions and engage in civic processes. In this sense religious organisations are no different from other lobbying groups and it is the job of government to balance the needs and wishes of all members of society when taking decisions.

The idea of a secular society is important and central to protecting equality and human rights and allowing every individual, regardless of background, to fulfil their potential as individuals and active citizens.

Dialogue and engagement

In Scotland, inter-faith dialogue has taken place at a local level since the formation of the first inter-faith group in Glasgow in the 1970s and further groups have continued to be formed. A national structure, the Scottish Inter-Faith Council, was established by faith communities in 1999 and, at the time of writing, there were also 14 well established local inter-faith groups with others being developed. Between them, these organisations have achieved many positive outcomes for people with religious beliefs. This good work needs to continue and expand to include dialogue with non-religious communities and groups.

In Scotland it is recognised that different types of dialogue need to include dialogue within and between diverse belief groups. This dialogue should take place at both local and national level. Each of these conversations and dialogues will require different contexts and processes. In addition, dialogue needs to reflect the changing society that we live in and has to recognise that new religions and ideas with a philosophical or religious basis continue to develop and attract adherents.

VISION, AIMS AND VALUES

The religions and philosophies that people in Scotland hold are absolutely integral to the ways in which they choose to live their lives. It is common for an individual's day to day actions to be heavily influenced by their beliefs. There are examples of this, such as the need for space to pray or the way in which an individual dresses, but these are of course only a small part of the picture. Each day we are faced with a series of decisions and how we choose to respond to these will be heavily influenced by our understanding of life. For example, our beliefs can be the main influencing factor on everything including whether we choose to buy fair-trade or organic products; the charitable causes we support; our sense of being treated justly or unjustly; whether we walk or drive to work; the kind of work we choose to do; the recreational activities we choose to pursue; and the way we raise our children.

It would of course be wholly wrong to suggest there is more of a moral prerogative among those who hold religious beliefs simply because their religious teaching of their faith sets out the moral ethos governing the faith. Indeed, the interpretation of these teachings is the basis for considerable amounts of theological debate and the formulation of a range of views and beliefs by those who are members of the same religion. Setting moral standards for ourselves is something that is fundamental to our human condition and exists as strongly among those who would not claim to subscribe to any particular religious or non-religious belief system.

We do of course also live in a society where all of our behaviour has to comply with the law, set out through the democratic process by our parliamentary governments, and enforced by the police, courts and regulators. These laws give us considerable freedom as individuals, which allow us to adhere to the principles of our religion or belief, and recognises this as an important basic human right. But the law also recognises that the society we live in is made up of many different people with many different views and outlooks, and that no one individual or group has the right to forcibly impose their views on society as a whole. We should always remember that if we value the rights that we have as individuals, then we need to respect and protect the rights that others have to be different from us and to make different choices from those we would make for ourselves.

It is therefore important to involve as many communities as possible in constructive dialogue. As such, this guidance document is aimed at all of Scotland's communities who want to rid our nation from the fear and mistrust that is caused by a lack of trust, respect and understanding.

Vision

The vision that informs this Good Practice Guide is one of a society in which Government and people recognise and appreciate that:

- We share a common humanity and concern for the future of Scotland, beyond our differences.

- Beliefs are important elements of a person's identity.

- All of the people living in Scotland have the right to their own beliefs and values.

- People have the right to speak from their value base when contributing to civic life.

- Different religions and non-religious beliefs are to be respected as part of the diversity of society.

- All the inhabitants of Scotland are inter-connected in a way that makes them inter-dependent.

- There is a need to listen to one another for the sake of the common good.

Aims

The aims of the Good Practice Guide are to:

- Help provide guidance on building good relations among and between religious and belief communities.

- Help develop multi-faceted approaches to interaction and dialogue.

- Promote the positive values of:

  - Listening to, understanding and respecting one another.

  - Behaving well towards one another.

  - Creating opportunities for dialogue, including dialogue about controversial and difficult issues.

  - Working together on issues of common concern.

  - Respectfully considering the views of all citizens.

Values

On the Scottish mace are the words compassion, wisdom, justice and integrity. These values, upon which the Scottish Parliament was founded, are the values that unite the political, educational, religious and non-religious sectors of society. These values also influence the various beliefs and moral education of our children and young people, supporting them in developing and reflecting upon their own values and assisting in counteracting prejudice and intolerance.

Compassion, wisdom, justice and integrity are the values which underpin the philosophy and intent of this Guide, and are a foundation for recognising and developing good relations.

EXISTING STRUCTURES FOR DIALOGUE

Dialogue structures

Within diverse communities there is a growing awareness of the need to engage in dialogue. There is an increased recognition that Scotland's diverse communities cannot exist in isolation and independently of every other community if we are to nurture a society based on equality for all. Polarisation of different communities and groups is not healthy and can only lead to fragmentation, division and a lack of community cohesion.

The need to recognise the equal legitimacy of every community to exist in Scotland is enshrined as a human right, and by this we need to think about community in the broadest sense of the word. While most religious communities have established formal structures, non-religious communities and groups have considerably fewer formal structures but still need to be seen as communities in the sense that those who advocate such beliefs are bound together by the beliefs they share.

Structures are already in place for the facilitation of inter-faith dialogue – through the Scottish Inter-Faith Council and local inter-faith groups across Scotland – and building on these, or using them as a template, to facilitate a wider dialogue could be considered. Having such structures in place becomes increasingly important to help maintain community cohesion through times of difficulty.

National inter-faith structures

In 1999 a national structure, the Scottish Inter Faith Council (SIFC), was created to promote inter-faith dialogue and to encourage faith communities in civic engagement. SIFC was brought into being by a number of Scotland's religious communities and was designed as a representative organisation whose membership structure includes diverse faith communities, local inter-faith groups and educational bodies with a multi-faith remit.

Over the years SIFC has organised national events which bring together:

- Religious communities.

- Local Inter-Faith Groups.

- Women of faith.

- Young people of faith.

- Scotland's religious leaders.

Since 2003, SIFC has also organised Scottish Inter Faith Week. This usually takes place during the last week of November/first week of December, coinciding with St Andrew's Day celebrating Scotland's patron saint, and has been used to raise awareness of, and celebrate, the inter-faith activities taking place throughout Scotland. It is supported by Scotland's religious leaders, local inter-faith groups, faith communities and voluntary

organisations, as well as the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, Scottish local authorities, and other statutory service providers in Scotland.

The idea behind Scottish Inter-Faith Week was that local inter-faith groups, religious communities, schools, public institutions and individuals host an inter-faith event relevant to their local communities. The aim of the week is to:

- Strengthen good inter-faith relations.

- Highlight and develop the inter-faith work being done at the local and national level.

- Encourage religious groups to reach out to one another and build stronger bonds of understanding and co-operation.

- Give religious communities an opportunity to work together on a common project or event.

- Allow statutory bodies added opportunities to support inter-faith awareness.

- Allow the general public to learn something of the beliefs and practices of religious communities.

The first National inter-faith week was held in England and Wales in 2009 and other European countries are also beginning to organise their own National inter-faith events. At the end of 2010, the United Nations approved proposals for a World Inter-faith Harmony Week, and a number of events took place to mark this in February 2011.

Local inter-faith structures

Having inter-faith structures at the local level is an effective means of engaging grass roots faith communities in dialogue. At the time of writing there are fourteen local inter-faith groups in Scotland in both urban and rural settings. These groups vary greatly in their organisational structure and in the variety of inter-faith activities they undertake. Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association, for example, hosts local, national and international events and has service level agreements with many statutory bodies which allow them to support the delivery of public services in a way which is sensitive to the particular needs of faith communities. Other groups meet regularly for dialogue and community activities and have varying degrees of collaboration and engagement with statutory bodies at the local level.

Inter-faith work led by religious communities

Some religious communities have established formal inter-faith structures – for example, the Christian Churches Agency for Inter-Faith Relations in Scotland and the Buddhist Centre for Inter-Faith and Healing – and since 2002 the religious leaders from the Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Baha'i, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities have met twice a year for dialogue. Such meetings have, on occasion, allowed a common and united response to be given to issues of local or national concern.

Representatives from diverse religions have also been appointed to serve on the Scottish Inter-Faith Council thereby giving them a direct input to national inter-faith engagement. These representatives may then work with their communities at the grass roots level to encourage greater awareness of the need for inter-faith dialogue and the benefits of living in a diverse society.

Dialogue initiative by non-religious belief groups

Shortly after the visit of Pope Benedict to Britain, 14 Humanists and 8 members of a group called 'The Catholic Voices Speakers' Team', met in London for two hours of discussion on contentious issues. A frank exchange of views then took place, aiming at clarifying areas of disagreement such as Aids and the use of condoms, faith schools, and same-sex adoption. One member of the Humanist team and one member of the Catholic team were delegated to summarise the views of the other side, in order to ensure that both sides listened carefully to each other's views.

The atmosphere was respectful and attentive, but there was no attempt to suppress real differences and everyone felt afterwards that they had learned from the experience. Further meetings are now being planned.

GOOD PRACTICE

The following are some ideas for, and examples of, good practice that have emerged from the experience of inter-faith dialogue in Scotland.

## Setting up a local dialogue group or initiative

There may be different reasons for setting up a local dialogue group such as:

- Working in an organisation with a remit to support belief communities individually or collectively.

- Being a committed member of a belief community or group seeking to dialogue with other similarly committed people

- Being a teacher or educationalist seeking to enhance the learning experiences of your students.

- Being a member of the public who is seeking to build friendship and share learning with people from diverse communities.

It may seem daunting to take the first steps towards setting up a group and below are some simple suggestions that may help:

- Check if a local group already exists in your area which shares the aims you are seeking to achieve. If they do then support them rather than set up another group.

- If no local inter-faith group exists locally then check if there is a regional or national organisation who may have contacts in your area or appropriate staff or resources to assist you.

- If you are a member of a belief community or group (e.g. a member of a local church, mosque) it may be a good idea to contact your local religious or non-religious society leader for assistance. They may be able to offer meeting spaces and some administrative support to help get a group started.

- If you are a professional working in an organisation with a remit to support belief groups then offering a venue and administrative support for a local group would be helpful

- If you are an individual then hosting a first meeting in your home may be possible or if not then ascertain if there is a community venue that could be used free of charge or cheaply.
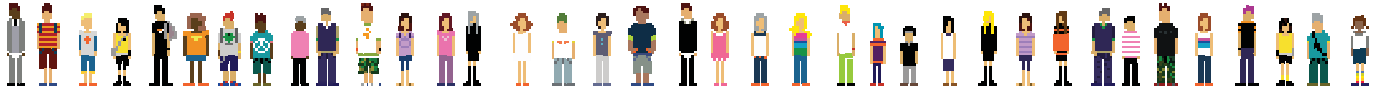
■ The next step would involve finding contact details for the diverse communities in your area; the library, telephone book or internet can be useful sources for such contacts. The UK Inter-faith Network or the Scottish Inter-faith Council and other national bodies like the Humanist Society of Scotland may also have useful contact details. Write to or visit the communities you have identified inviting them to send someone along to a first meeting. It may also be possible to publicly advertise the first meeting.

■ This first meeting is an opportunity to get to know one another and share ideas for the future. Simply inviting people to introduce themselves and share something of their personal story could be sufficient for a first meeting. This could give you ideas and topics for discussion at future meetings, and help you to set agendas which will be interesting to those attending.

An excellent guide on what is involved in organising different types of inter-faith groups has been prepared by the UK Inter-faith Network and can be accessed and downloaded from their website.

Ground rules for dialogue and engagement

Understanding, acceptance and respect develop when people get to know one another at a personal level. This level of engagement comes through dialogue but it is important to remember that individuals bring to the dialogue their insecurities, prejudices and supposed understanding of others. Genuine dialogue is about listening as well as speaking with courtesy, honesty and integrity. It is important that people engaging in dialogue know that they will be spoken to with respect, will themselves speak with respect, and that diverse views will be expressed and listened to with no undue pressure to change one's views. It is also important to ensure that the date and time chosen for dialogue takes into consideration the festivals, holy days and prayer times of the various communities so that no one feels excluded.

Establishing ground rules or guidelines can ensure an authentic and legitimate dialogue that is honest and respectful. These ground rules should include:

■ Learning to listen to and understand what others actually believe and value without prejudice.

■ Accepting the right of others to hold views different to your own.

■ Respecting the confidentiality of those who discuss personal situations and incidents.

- Being sensitive to others' beliefs about food, dress and social etiquette.

- Recognising the positive and negative aspects of beliefs – be objective and constructive, do not assume that because someone does not see the world in the same way as you that their views are less valid.

- Recognising that all of us fall short of the ideals of our own traditions.

- Being aware that dialogue takes place at different levels – sometimes people are speaking from a personal perspective and at other times speaking as a representative of a community or group.

- Seeking clarification about what is being said with no intention of undermining others.

Facilitating dialogue

The basis of honest dialogue, especially when discussing difficult issues, is friendship. Friendship is usually developed over time and so social gatherings of religious and/ or non-religious groups are a good way of establishing friendly relations and helping people engage with one another at a personal level. It is to be hoped, however, that dialogue will not remain stuck at the level of social engagement but that good personal relationships will allow for a depth of discussion about areas of common interest as well as difficult issues and tensions when they arise. In these situations it is sometimes useful to have knowledge of different techniques which can aid constructive dialogue.

Techniques for dialogue

Examples of such techniques include:

- Asking a question which allows for conversation to flow freely and personal views to be aired.

- Reading a book or text of common interest and discussing the issues raised by it.

- Presenting a stimulus, such as a religious or symbolic artefact, for personal reflection, followed by group discussion and the airing of questions raised by the stimulus.

- Asking participants to suggest agenda items, perhaps by writing them on flip charts. Support can then be garnered for each item and a decision reached as to what items should take priority for discussion or future meetings.

- Small group discussions in which each participant places three items in the circle. Each person reclaims one of their items when they speak which allows each person to make three contributions to the conversation. This slows down the conversation and makes it more reflective. A similar approach is the use of a 'talking stick' which is passed to whoever wants to contribute something to the discussion, allowing the person holding the stick to speak without interruption. It's a good idea to agree in advance the length of time any participant can speak for at any one time.

- Café conversations where participants converse around tables and after a set period of time move on to a new table and a new group with a different question or issue to be discussed.

- Fishbowl conversations with a small group in the centre of a circle discussing the issues while those who make up the circle listen to the discussion. This is followed by time for reflection on what has been heard and how the conversation has progressed.

- Conflict spectrum which asks participants to take up a physical position in the room demonstrating where they stand on a particular issue. A facilitator then interviews people about their view point and sets up a conversation between people with different positions.

- Conflict Tree in which each side in a conflict sets down the problem as they see it, including the causes and consequences of the problem. This is then exchanged with the other group who discuss the perspective outlined by the others before engaging in a general discussion and dialogue.

- A graffiti board where individuals reflect on an issue or topic in silence and then write comments on a common board or sheet of paper. All reflect on these in silence before beginning a discussion on them.

Safe spaces for dialogue

A safe space is not just a space in which people are physically safe but is also a space where the participants and environment are imbued with an attitude and atmosphere of respect and openness towards others.

The majority of groups and individuals consulted in the formation of this document stated the importance of having safe and neutral spaces intended for dialogue. This is particularly true if the dialogue is to take place around difficult issues. If dialogue is to be open and honest then it is important that the space for dialogue does not belong to any one religion or group. Relationships are enhanced when people are welcomed into places of worship to share in festivals and social events. However, if the invitation to a place of worship is for dialogue then there is a greater need for sensitivity. For example, space used for worship might not be a suitable environment for dialogue, although an accompanying hall might be.

Many local inter-faith groups throughout Scotland already create such spaces for dialogue by using:

- Local authority buildings.

- Libraries.

- Museums.

- Community centres.

- Places of learning.

An excellent example of a neutral space for dialogue would be the St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art. This museum was created with the help of the religious communities of Scotland and includes a neutral space for dialogue. The museum also has an ethos of encouraging engagement between religion and wider society.

Accessibility

It is important for a physical space to be accessible and suitable to people who are disabled – whether this is mobility impairment such as someone using a wheelchair, or sensory impairment such as someone using a hearing aid. However, the physical space is not the only consideration that needs to be taken into account when creating an environment for dialogue. If any written documents are being used it is important to check if anyone needs to have these in a different format, for example in larger print for someone who has sight impairment. If food is being provided it should be suitable for all dietary needs. Adhering to the ground rules for respectful dialogue is important to ensure that all participants are treated equally, such as consideration for the prayer requirements of some faiths.

The following will give you some general good practice tips that will help you ensure that the physical space for your meeting is accessible and suitable:

- Don't assume a disabled person needs assistance – BUT don't be afraid to ask the person if you are unsure about what they need or how to help.

- Ask how they would like you to help – most people will be able to tell you the best way to help. Always wait until your offer of help is accepted before you act. Don't be offended if your offer isn't accepted – most disabled people prefer to do things for themselves as much as possible.

- Treat adults like adults. Only call a person by their first name if you are calling others by their first name.

- If you are surprised by someone's appearance or feel uncomfortable, try not to show it. Make eye contact just as you would with anyone else – but don't stare.

- Only ask questions about, or refer to, a person's disability if it is relevant. Never ask – 'what happened to you?' – will it really make any difference to how you treat them?

- Communication is a basic requirement. Speak directly to the disabled person – not to their companion or interpreter.

- If you are not sure about the person's preferred way of communicating, just ask.

- Slowness or impaired speech has nothing to do with people's intelligence. Pay attention, be patient and don't butt in or finish sentences.

- Don't pretend to understand what a person is saying if you don't – ask them to repeat it or show you in some other way. Or repeat what you're not sure of and the person's reaction will guide you.

Challenges to dialogue

If dialogue and good relations are to become integral within Scottish society and contribute to social cohesion certain challenges need to be acknowledged. Some of these are the need to:

- Identify and engage the more extremist elements of all religious and philosophical belief groups in dialogue.

- Develop effective strategies for supporting communities when there is a local, national or international crisis.

- Develop strategies for dialogue when there is conflict between religious and non-religious groups.

- Work with the media to encourage more sensitive portrayals of religion and philosophical belief issues.

- Create supportive environments for the discussion of the tensions that can arise between the promotion of equality and the beliefs of particular groups.

- Find imaginative ways of engaging society in developing an understanding of the diversity of people's beliefs and their specific needs.

- Create forums for reflection within and between people of diverse beliefs regarding what it means to live in a secular society.

If dialogue is to take place concerning very difficult and potentially divisive issues then it may occasionally be necessary for someone trained in conflict resolution and mediation to be brought into the safe space to help facilitate the dialogue.

There is also a need to create spaces that are not necessarily intended for dialogue. For example, sanctuaries can be created, and indeed have been created, in hospitals, airports, universities, prisons, workplaces and so forth and these should be places for quiet prayer or reflection that feel comfortable to anyone whether religious or not.

IDEAS FOR DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

This section of the resource has practical ideas and examples to assist in a variety of situations where dialogue and engagement can take place. There will of course be many other examples and the ones below are simply for illustration. The examples below look at:

- Meetings for Dialogue.

- Shared meals.

- Community picnics.

- Public seminars.

- Visits to places of worship or sites of importance.

- School events.

- Celebration of diverse holy days, festivals, and anniversaries.

- Art-based dialogue projects.

- Joint social action projects.

Meetings for dialogue

Perhaps the most straightforward event is the meeting that has been arranged for dialogue. This sort of meeting is usually organised in advance and can focus on a particular topic for discussion. Such meetings can be held in a variety of venues, from places of worship to people's homes. It is best to have a specific host for the meeting who will welcome everyone and introduce the topic for discussion. It would be appropriate to offer simple hospitality such as light refreshments. The ground rules for dialogue are important at such meetings. Sometimes an individual might want to host a meeting for dialogue in their own home and invite their personal friends and contacts.

Type of activity	Meetings for Dialogue
Example	A meeting is to be organised by a local inter-faith group to discuss the topic of 'religious education'. The meeting is to be open to the public. The communities organising the meeting are Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Baha'i.
Reason	The local inter-faith group wants to extend its activities to ensure that face to face dialogue takes place between different groups to further develop respect and understanding locally.
Planning process and hosting event	**The inter-faith group meets to plan the event. They:** • Ensure they are clear about the aim of the meeting. • Consider the different techniques for dialogue. • Choose an appropriate technique for the event. • Decide who is to facilitate the event and keep the dialogue going. • Choose a venue, date (ensuring that it does not clash with any major religious festival) and time of meeting. • Allocate a person to book the venue. • Consider publicity and who is to be invited. • Allocate responsibility for ensuring the event is adequately advertised and invitations sent. • Organise catering (ensuring food is appropriate for those attending). • Allocate a person and funds for catering. **On the day:** The **organising group** arrives at the venue early to make sure all is in place, such as: • Seating arrangements (which includes tables to sit around). • Food and drink (which on this occasion includes vegetarian snacks). • Paper, pens and a flip chart (to record the key discussion points). The **Chair of the local inter-faith group** welcomes people and encourages them to sit in groups which have a variety of beliefs. The **facilitator** then conducts the meeting by: • Setting out some ground rules, emphasising the need for confidentiality, honesty and respect. • Introducing the topic and process. • Alerting participants to the amount of time to be given to the discussion. • Ensuring participants engage in the dialogue by keeping an eye on proceedings to see that people are clear and at ease with the chosen process. • Concluding the discussion. • Assisting the participants to share their experience of the dialogue. The **Chair** of the group then: • Shares some brief information notices (including future dates of meetings). • Thanks everyone for coming and distributes simple evaluation sheets which are collected as people enjoy a hot drink and snack.
Outcome of the event	The following outcomes were achieved: • Breaking down barriers and building trust, respect and understanding between the different groups participating. • Establishing a constructive basis for dialogue between faith communities. • Allowing people to make new friends and friendships. • Assisting people to accept that although people hold different views they can also appreciate what unites them and brings them together. • Information on the different views of the topic for discussion are recorded.

Type of activity	Meetings for Dialogue
After the event	The planning group met to evaluate the meeting and consider the appropriateness of the topic and the process and technique used for discussion. Based on the evaluation, the group began to develop ideas for future meetings and decided that a follow up meeting could be a shared meal to further cement the bonds of friendship established at the dialogue event. They decided that the next meeting would be invitation only (to the participants at the first meeting to allow greater depth of discussion) but that future meetings would be open to the public again.

Shared meals

Although a shared meal involves a lot of preparation, it is a good way to create a warm and hospitable atmosphere thereby encouraging friendly discussion. People from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds enjoy conversing over food.

Preparing for a shared meal is also a good way to learn about the diverse dietary requirements of people from different backgrounds. There are many examples of successful shared meals taking place in Scotland such as a Jewish/Muslim shared meal prepared by the women of both communities working together and a 'faith and food' event organised by a local inter-faith group. It is possible to organise a meal where diverse religious needs are catered for by preparing food that includes halal meat, kosher food (from a recognised source), and vegetarian food but many groups opt for having a totally vegetarian buffet as this usually caters for most dietary requirements. Another option for a shared meal is the 'Pot Luck Supper' where each community brings food to be shared. Labelling the food is essential on these occasions.

Type of activity	Shared Meals
Example	A local group of religious leaders decide to organise an inter-faith Burn's Supper for religion and belief communities in their local area.
Reason	There has been some tension in the local area due to international incidents affecting faith communities and the religious leaders believe that a social event will help alleviate tension.
Planning process and hosting event	**The Religious Leaders decide to:** • Invite a representative from each of the local faith communities to form a small **committee** and they then invite them to a first meeting. • Choose a venue, date and time for the supper. • Agree how many people from each of the communities should be invited. The **committee** then consider the: • Kind of food to be served (e.g. a vegetarian Haggis). • Method of preparation. • Type of entertainment (each community being asked to provide a song, story or poem). • Decoration of the venue. • Design of the invitations and allocating someone to carry out this task. • Drawing up of a list of invitees, ensuring an equal number of invitations to each local place of worship. • Allocation of tasks to members of the committee.

Type of activity	Shared Meals
Planning process and hosting event continued	**At a follow up meeting they decide who:** • Will act as **host** for the evening. • Will give the address to the haggis. • Will make the reply of the lasses. • Should contact these people. **On the night, the committee:** • Arrange for the meal to be prepared on time. • Decorate the room and set the tables (a symbol of each world faith is used as a place setting and people are asked to sit at the symbol of their own faith to ensure a mixture of faiths at each table). • Arrange for the **host** for the evening to introduce the speeches and entertainment and at the end of the evening thank everyone for coming. • Arrange for a group to stay behind to help clean up.
Outcome of the event	Although the international tension is still acknowledged, the local faith communities feel a renewed sense of trust and friendship and a sense of their shared identity as citizens of Scotland.
After the event	The committee ensured an article was sent out to various newspapers and faith community bulletins and a follow up evaluation meeting was held.

Community picnics

A community picnic allows whole families from diverse backgrounds to come together. It also has the advantage of people bringing their own food so all dietary needs are catered for.

Type of activity	Community Picnics
Example	The local inter-faith group decides they want to host an event which is fun and involves families in an informal way. They decide an inter-faith picnic will be ideal for this.
Reason	To encourage families who might not attend formal inter-faith events to have an enjoyable informal inter-faith experience.
Planning process and hosting event	A **sub-committee** of the local inter-faith group agree to plan the picnic. The **sub-committee** then meet and allocate tasks including: • Finding a place of natural beauty to host the picnic. • Sending out invitations (by email) to faith communities and family members in the local area. • Booking a nearby place of worship which could be available in case of bad weather. • Deciding on games and icebreakers to involve the families who would attend the picnic. • Organising for a couple of confident individuals to facilitate the games and icebreakers. **On the day:** The **sub-committee** ensure there is a simple sign erected to point to the picnic spot. They also bring a large rug for participants to sit on and then circulate to make sure everyone is involved and happy.
Outcome of the event	The picnic was an enjoyable experience which helped to create a sense of community and encouraged people to engage more with others.
After the event	The inter-faith group sent an article to the local newspaper and decided that the inter-faith picnic would be an annual event.

Public seminars

A public seminar is usually a meeting that has been organised for a specific purpose. It may be that the seminar is organised to consult on something of public interest to belief communities, or it may be a seminar organised on an annual basis by a local or national organisation. A seminar would normally be more formal than a meeting for dialogue and might involve a specific programme, perhaps including guest speakers and workshops.

Type of activity	Public Seminars
Example	A local inter-faith group wants to host a public seminar to discuss a Government proposal to ban the religious slaughter of animals.
Reason	The local inter-faith group realises that this proposal would have huge implications for some of the religious communities in their area and want to feed their views into the Government consultation.
Planning process and hosting event	**The inter-faith group meet to plan the event. They:** • Discuss how best to introduce the general public to the issue under consultation. • Decide on an informed guest presenter. • Agree on and book a venue. • Design and publish a poster advertising the event to the general public. • Send out invitations to a targeted audience (particularly local faith and belief communities). • Organise for light refreshments to be provided. • Choose and invite an appropriate chairperson. • Select a member of the group to take notes of the issues discussed during the meeting. **On the day of the public seminar, the inter-faith group:** • Prepares the room beforehand. • Has copies of the Government consultation available for the participants. • Welcomes participants. • Introduces the guest presenter. • Facilitates discussion around the topic. • Ensures those present know how to have their views included in the Government's consultation. • Ensures that they have the contact details of those participating.
Outcome of the event	The general public, and particularly the local faith and belief communities, are informed of the pertinent issue and encouraged to respond to the Government consultation.
After the event	The local inter-faith group evaluated the meeting and sent round a summary of the discussion to those who left their contact details. The summary also included information on how to follow the Government consultation process so that everyone present understood what the next steps were.

IDEAS FOR DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

23

Visits to places of worship or sites of importance

A visit to a place of worship or site of importance usually needs to be organised in advance but is a very worthwhile, enjoyable and educational activity for groups and individuals to undertake. It is good to know in advance if you may be asked to remove your shoes and wear a head-covering. If you are at a place of worship during a ceremony, visitors are not expected or required to join in but instead can simply observe what is taking place.

Type of activity	Visits to Places of Worship
Example	The local Humanist group wants to visit a Mosque in their local area.
Reason	The Humanist group wants to better understand the Islamic faith, to learn something of their faith and practices and the visit is seen as an essential educational experience.
Planning process and hosting event	**Planning process:** • The secretary of the Humanist group makes an initial approach to the place of worship to determine a suitable date for the visit. • The secretary then arranges for a representative of the local Mosque to attend a meeting of the Humanist group to brief them on what to expect. • A short information sheet outlining key dialogue information such as the need for respect, honesty and hospitality is handed out to the group before the representative of the Mosque arrives. • The local Imam attends a meeting and shares relevant information such as the fact that people are expected to remove their shoes and women are expected to cover their heads and also that people may be expected to sit on the floor. **On the day of the visit:** • A representative of the Humanist group offers a word of greeting and presents a small gift at the Mosque. • Because of the earlier preparatory meeting everyone is comfortable with what is expected of them.
Outcome of the event	The local Humanist group feel they have developed a greater understanding of Islam and that a friendship between the two groups has begun, creating more community harmony and respect.
After the event	After the visit the group reflected on the experience and what was learnt from it. The secretary sent a letter of thanks to the Mosque and the visiting group shared with the wider Humanist group what they experienced and learnt during the visit.

School events

It is really important to encourage young people to understand the necessity of building good relations with people who hold different beliefs to their own. Organising an event in a school can be a wonderful way to engage young people. A school is an environment that is already geared towards learning and where there is the support structure of a teacher and a well equipped building. Ideally the local inter-faith group may have some trained teachers as members and it is good then to use their expertise.

However some local groups may not have this kind of expertise but should not feel daunted at the prospect of going into a school. Many schools are keen for their pupils to have direct face to face encounters with individuals from diverse backgrounds and local belief groups could provide speakers from such backgrounds to complement a social studies or Religious and Moral Education class. There are many examples of this kind of collaborative work going on around Scotland. There are also many inter-faith resources that could be offered to schools for teachers to use in the classroom (see resource section at Appendix 4).

Type of activity	Inter-faith Events in Schools
Example	A local inter-faith group in a remote area of Scotland wants to organise a schools conference to mark Scottish Inter-faith Week.
Reason	In organising this event, the inter-faith group hopes to raise awareness of religious diversity and the necessity to challenge discrimination and misunderstanding. It was felt that the young people in the local schools needed exposure to many of the issues which are evident in the main areas of population in Scotland and which could also be present locally.
Planning process and hosting event	The local inter-faith group believed this conference was so important that they sought funding and, being successful, were then able to bring trained inter-faith facilitators to the rural area. The local group then worked in partnership with the trained facilitators. **Planning process:** • Head teachers were contacted for their advice and support of such a project. • Invitations were sent to all secondary schools, explaining the purpose of the event and seeking their involvement. • Four secondary schools responded and the local group then worked in partnership with the facilitators and these local schools. • A date and venue were set for the conference. **The support given came from a variety of sources such as:** • The local authority. • The Scottish Inter-faith Council. • The Church of Scotland. • A National funding organisation. • Local secondary schools. The **Partners** (Local Inter-faith Group, National facilitators and local schools) worked via email to plan a suitable programme for the event. The facilitators arrived the day before the event to ensure everything was in place and a successful conference was held.
Outcome of the event	The conference content and process was well received by the schools involved. It met many of the criteria of the Curriculum for Excellence and lead to further enquiries for input into school programmes by members of the group.
After the event	The local inter-faith group evaluated the success of the event and sent an article to the local newspaper. Further radio coverage also resulted from the event and a member of the local inter-faith group is now a regular speaker in local schools.

Celebration of diverse holy days, festivals and anniversaries

Often groups and individuals are invited to join in the celebration of the holy days and festivals of diverse faith traditions. This is an enjoyable way to visit a community at a time of special significance. Festivals and holy days usually involve music, food, prayer and occasionally communal ritual or singing. Joining in is always optional and participants should not feel under pressure to take part.

Type of activity	Taking Part in Religious Celebrations
Example	The local inter-faith group is invited to join in with a local Sikh celebration and four members of the group decide they will go along and represent the group.
Reason	The inter-faith group recognises that it is important for the local faith communities to see inter-faith groups supporting their events. They also recognise that it is a wonderful learning experience for group members.
Planning process and hosting event	With this kind of event the members simply have to turn up at the event, although it is always good to do some preliminary preparation to see what dress and social etiquette will be required.
Outcome of the event	Friendships are built and two members of the local Sikh community ask to join the local inter-faith group, thereby strengthening the local group.
After the event	The members of the local inter-faith group shared their learning experience with the wider group at the next meeting.

Inter-faith services

An inter-faith service is a very good way of publicly demonstrating that diverse belief communities can share a platform together on special occasions, such as times of national celebration or mourning. A lot of work has to go into balancing the contributions of all those invited to share this public platform and to ensure that nothing is said that would compromise any of the basic tenets of faith of those present.

It can cause difficulties if people are asked to pray together at an inter-faith meeting. This is because there are very diverse ways that communities pray, and prayer may not be a religious practice of some (i.e. Buddhists). However, communities can come together to pray and show common concern by praying according to their own particular traditions. This is not a communal act of worship but rather a reflective service around a common theme or concern. At inter-faith meetings or services it may be more appropriate to begin with a moment of reflective silence rather than communal prayer. Such considerations become all the more important when seeking to involve broader participation than religious communities.

To prepare a public inter-faith service or time for reflection takes a lot of negotiation and consultation.

Type of activity	Inter-faith Services
Example	The local university hosts an annual inter-faith service to celebrate the communal life of the university.
Reason	The event creates a sense of community solidarity and harmony and demonstrates the multi-faith and belief nature of the university.
Planning process and hosting event	**Process:** • The multi-faith Chaplain of the university sets up a **working group** with a representative from each of the communities to be involved in the event. • A theme for the inter-faith service is chosen by the working group. • The working group decides on a short reading and song to be sung together at the beginning and end of the service which reflects the mood of the event. • The working group asks each participating community to choose a way of expressing the theme according to their own tradition. It is indicated that this could be a reading, prayer, blessing, song, poem, dance and so forth. • The working group then decide on the order of the contributions so that there is some kind of variety in the presentations. • The Chaplain is appointed as the **host** for the event. • A decision is made that a significant figure should give a short talk and introduce the various contributions. • Arrangements are then made for the order of service to be printed out for all those attending.
Outcome of the event	A very successful inter-faith service was held that made individuals from the diverse communities studying at the university feel involved and welcome.
After the event	The Chaplain organised a meeting of the working group to evaluate the event and asked for their support again the following year.

Art-based projects

Hosting an art-based project is an excellent way of bringing people together in a creative undertaking. This type of project will usually need the guidance of a professional artist or facilitator. One of the advantages of such a project is that something imaginative is created and those working on the project together have opportunities to discuss their beliefs while expressing themselves artistically. Examples of such arts-based projects include a multi-layered banner that was created over a number of months by women from diverse faith traditions working together. The banner included quotes that were woven around themes of unity and diversity and became a showpiece at the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art.

Type of activity	Art-based Dialogue Projects
Example	A local inter-faith women's group decide that they will host an inter-faith arts project. The art project involves making a 'faith book' from various artistic materials.
Reason	To enable participants to put together a small book of chosen texts from different faith traditions, thereby getting to know one another and the various texts better. By expressing faith and belief through the arts, it is expected that all the participants will have a deeper understanding of each other's religions and beliefs, thereby helping to overcome stereotyping and prejudice.

Type of activity	Art-based Dialogue Projects
Planning process and hosting event	**Process:** • A venue and date for the event is chosen by the inter-faith women's group. • They then decide on someone with artistic expertise to lead the day. • Materials (e.g. assorted paper, fabric and any other materials that are required) are collected beforehand. • A number of sessions are arranged to discuss the common values that people of faith and none share. The women share favourite quotations around these values. **On the day:** • Resources of poems and quotations for possible inclusion in the books are made available by the artistic facilitator. • Under the instruction of the artistic facilitator, faith books are made by writing in quotations and decorating the books.
Outcome of the event	The discussion on shared values in a relaxed and enjoyable way helped create bonds of friendship between women from diverse backgrounds. Those participating learned much about each other and the common values at the core of all traditions.
After the event	The inter-faith women's group decided that they would exhibit their artistic 'faith books' at a public event they were planning to hold a few weeks later. A letter of thanks and a book token was sent to the facilitator.

Joint social action projects

An effective way of developing good relations between people from different beliefs is to engage in joint community projects. This gives a sense of common purpose, allowing for the development of friendship and conversation which is the basis of dialogue and understanding.

For community projects to be most effective as a means of promoting understanding between communities, it is important that the project be of common interest or concern to all those involved. It is also essential that each group contributes to the drawing up of agendas and action plans and that the various communities have the energy, personnel and time to contribute to the project. It can be disempowering for smaller communities or groups to be expected to contribute the same time and resources as larger well-funded, well-resourced communities and groups.

At times people are asked to get involved in agendas which are not a priority for them or their communities and for which it is difficult to find time and energy. Appointing people in a tokenistic way does not make a project inclusive.

Where people of different beliefs are invited to participate in an already established project, a lot of work needs to be done to re-articulate the aims of the project in such a way that everyone can feel ownership and is able to contribute to its on-going work. Joint social action projects are also an excellent way for religious and non-religious people to contribute cooperatively for the common good of all.

Type of activity	Joint Social Action Projects
Example	A local inter-faith group decide that the local canal needs cleaning and that they will organise a day when representatives of their diverse faith communities can come together to do this.
Reason	The canal is a popular place for people to take walks and the inter-faith group wants to do something useful for the local community. They also feel that by working together they can demonstrate that religion can be a positive force for the common good.
Planning process and hosting event	**Before the event:** • The secretary of the local group volunteers to coordinate the event. • The secretary contacts the local authorities in the area to establish the process necessary for conducting such a clean up. • The local authorities offer protective clothing and spades to the group. • The secretary prepares a list of health and safety information to distribute to the group. • A date and time for the clean up is established and the information sent round the representatives of the local inter-faith group. • After receiving the date and time, the inter-faith group representatives send out information to their respective communities. • Three members of the inter-faith group are appointed to bring hot flasks of drinks. • Another member of the group is tasked with bringing a first aid box in case of any accident. **On the day:** • The local group distribute the protective clothing and spades. • The local group coordinate the clean up. • The local group ensure that everyone at the event is behaving responsibly.
Outcome of the event	The local canal is a much cleaner place. The local faith communities developed deeper bonds of friendship by working together and effectively demonstrated that religions can work together for the common good.
After the event	A photograph of the group in action was sent to the local newspaper and was published. The local inter-faith group met a week later to evaluate the clean up and decided it was so successful that they would now undertake regular social action projects, thereby assisting the local community and developing stronger bonds of friendship.

All of the good practice examples given above can be taken forward as individual events in their own right, or as part of a series or programme of events such as Scottish Inter-Faith Week. Anyone who wants to become involved with Scottish Inter-Faith Week should contact the Scottish Inter-Faith Council directly to find out more.

EDUCATION

Education at all levels has long been recognised as a tool for change and a way of challenging perceptions and misconceptions. Education and learning takes place throughout our lives, and, as individuals, we can all continue to develop our understanding of those who may be seen as different from ourselves. Active educational inclusion can help to break down barriers within and between communities.

The influence that education has on shaping the attitudes that we hold throughout our lives should not be underestimated, and it is important to recognise the good work that schools are already involved in delivering. In particular, we should consider the impact of external influences on an individual's behaviours and attitudes, but before we do that it is worth touching on the curriculum structure in Scottish schools.

Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence aims to provide a coherent, inclusive, enriched, progressive and more flexible curriculum from 3 to 18 years and is firmly focused on the needs of the learner, designed to enable them to develop four key capacities to become:

- Successful learners.

- Confident individuals.

- Responsible citizens.

- Effective contributors.

The document *Building the Curriculum 3 – a Framework for Learning and Teaching* defines the curriculum as, "...the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated." It recognises the importance of students learning about the beliefs, values and practices of world religions as well as many traditions and life-stances independent of religious belief. Learners will be able to recognise, understand and accept diversity and develop respect for those whose beliefs are different from their own.

The school curriculum

In terms of developing constructive dialogue on beliefs, religious or not, education focused on philosophical, religious and moral education seems like the obvious route to do this. Curriculum for Excellence will afford every child and young person in Scotland a broad general education, but crucially it encourages inter-disciplinary teaching and learning, and so it will be an integral part of Curriculum for Excellence's success that teachers plan across different departments and curricular areas to achieve this. As teachers make use of the relevant experiences and outcomes, they will draw on the resources of the school's community and context to inform their planning. For example, in teaching about the practices and traditions of others, this can be made explicit through visits to local places of worship as well as through festivals and celebrations associated with various belief traditions. In addition, this could be taken forward through visits to museums and places of historic importance.

Diversity and positive education

Respect for the diversity of beliefs, religious and non-religious, needs to be part of the ethos of all schools. It is of course important to recognise that the influence that our schools have on our young people goes far beyond the curriculum and what is taught through formal lessons in classrooms. The behaviour of teachers, classroom assistants and those visiting schools – including school chaplains, community and religious leaders, health visitors, and parents – contributes to the creation of the positive environment needed to ensure that our young people learn in an arena where difference is respected and all are valued and accepted.

There are a number of good practice steps that can be taken to ensure diversity is positively embedded in the day to day life of any educational establishment:

- Acknowledging the festivals of all beliefs represented in the school to help pupils feel that their tradition is valued.

- Allowing children and staff to wear any necessary religious and traditional articles of clothing or jewellery as long as it does not hinder communication or compromise health and safety.

- Addressing belief-related needs such as making a room available for prayer and reflection and showing consideration to those who are fasting.

- Planning school events in consultation with appropriate belief calendars. This is made much simpler when schools are issued with such a calendar by local authorities.

- Considering dietary needs for school dinners and when planning parties or distributing presents.

- Visually celebrating the diversity of Scotland including displaying positive images of people of a variety of beliefs.

Religious observance

Religious observance also offers the possibility of developing understanding and respect. There is already published religious observance advice which states that religious observance needs to be developed in a way which reflects and understands the diversity of Scotland. It states that school assemblies should be sensitive to all traditions and origins and should seek to reflect these where possible. However, it must equally be sensitive to the needs and beliefs of students and staff who are not religious.

There should be a clear distinction between assemblies devised for the purpose of religious observance and assemblies for other purposes, such as celebrating success or a particular school event.
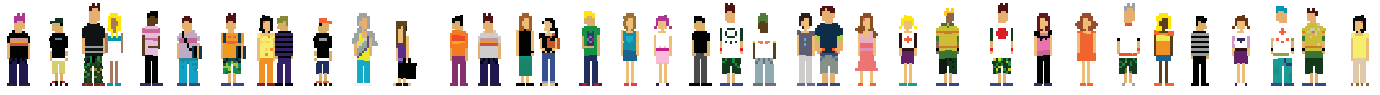
Extra-curricular education

Educational programmes out-with normal school hours can also contribute to the development of a positive learning environment. But specific activities aimed at discussing issues around beliefs can also help to break down the barriers which students may perceive exists between them and those from different traditions or cultures. In doing this, extra-curricular activities can contribute to the wider work which is being taken forward in many communities to further community cohesion and mutual understanding.

There are many good examples of how this work can be taken forward and we have included a number in this guide. By using this guide to build and adapt good practice so that it is suitable for young people, discussions can be taken forward in an open and non-threatening way.

Further education

Many people in society today have not benefited from current approaches to religious education. Those who were never taught about different beliefs may find it useful to learn in the work place through training or at colleges of further/higher education. For example, Dundee Inter-Faith Association ran evening courses on the world religions for the general public. There is potential for such courses to be broadened to include all beliefs.

Higher education

Universities and further education colleges also have an important role in promoting understanding. Many universities run religious studies courses and degrees which allow students to study, in depth, a variety of religious and non-religious perspectives. In addition, the Centre for Inter-Faith Studies at Glasgow University has been unique in Scotland. By training post-graduate and doctoral students in inter-faith/belief studies it has given students the tools to skillfully tackle important questions arising from inclusive dialogue and prepared students for work in this area. The Centre has also made a valuable contribution by bringing internationally renowned speakers to give public lectures on these issues. These academic speakers have not been afraid to address the difficult and complex questions and issues that need to be faced in dialogue.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

We live in a media saturated society where news stories are often told in sound-bites that focus on the impact of national and international events. The spread and availability of the internet also allows people 24 hour a day, 7 day a week access to sites which report every bit of news, with varying degrees of accuracy, from global disasters to celebrity gossip. By accessing the internet through wireless phone and laptop technologies, you can find out the latest news almost regardless of where you happen to be.

It is understandable that, in a society where people feel very time constrained, media outlets see a need to package their stories in a bite-sized format that makes it easy for all to draw the main messages from. In our society, freedom of speech and freedom of expression are highly valued and it would not be right to try to influence the press in any way which would interfere with their impartiality.

Nevertheless, the media holds a powerful sway over public opinion and has the capacity to influence that opinion in a positive or a negative way. It is very easy for communities that feel they are under media scrutiny to also feel that their views and beliefs are being portrayed in an unbalanced way. This could lead to the whole community feeling it is being portrayed in a one-dimensional and negative manner. Often such portrayals can stem from the views or actions of a small number of adherents, or even one individual, of a particular belief, and it is important to remember that there is a divergence of views within individual belief communities and that views of one individual should not be used to tarnish all.

However, it is also not acceptable that belief communities lay the blame for what they perceive as negative portrayals of their views entirely at the feet of the media. It would be wrong for belief communities to feel they are passive bystanders who cannot promote the positive aspects of their beliefs, or of the work they are taking forward with others for the benefit of all. It is certainly true that working with the media can present challenges, and be quite daunting for local groups and organisations who are not used to promoting their activities, but if you have a good story to tell then you should certainly think about whether there is potential to promote this through the media.

When considering whether there is scope for the media to report a story you have been involved with, you should consider:

- **Who are your local media outlets?** Include community and grass roots media as they are often the ones who will be most interested in a good news story from a local community. Also think about possible interest from the specialist media – for example, magazines and newsletters aimed at those working in the voluntary sector, education or inter-faith.

- **What is the main message you want to get across?** Think about the story you are going to tell and why it is worth telling.

- **Who is the potential audience for your story?** Who will be interested to read about it?

- **Who is going to help tell the story?** For example, if you are running an event, who will be invited and will they be able to provide a quote for the media. Also think about whether anyone well known or respected (either in the community or wider) could be involved.

- **What photo opportunities will there be for the media?** Who will be involved in the photos and, if children are taking part, do you have written consent from their parents?

- **What opportunities are there to promote your event** or get your story to a wider audience? Consider using press releases and radio advertising.

- **Can the internet be used** during and after your event (such as the use of video links, podcasts and so forth)?

Of course, not all events are going to attract any level of media attention. But it is worth thinking about the potential for a good news story while you are in the preparation stages of projects and events. By planning ahead and opening your doors to the media you may be able to achieve positive news stories about your community.

…the media holds a powerful sway over public opinion and has the capacity to influence that opinion in a positive or a negative way.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social Networking is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as '…the use of dedicated websites and applications to communicate with other users or to find people with similar interests to one's own'. Popular social networking sites include facebook, MySpace and Bebo as well as photo and video sharing sites such as Flickr, Picasa and YouTube.

Social networking sites can be very beneficial to your local group or network and can connect people at little or no financial cost. Such sites play a significant and growing part in today's media and communication environment – a trend which is likely to continue in the future.

Social networking sites are distinct from standard websites which become outdated more and more rapidly if they cannot adapt to the latest technologies which people are seeking to use. Online technology is no longer just about presenting information but about building a platform that can bring people together in new and exciting ways. Social networking sites allow users to be more interactive and can speed up communication with those you are in contact with on a regular basis.

What you need to think about when setting up your page

- Which social networking site will you use?

- Will you set up a group page or an individual page?

Group page v individual page – the facebook example

According to facebook, individual pages '…allow entities such as public figures and organisations to broadcast information to their fans'.

In contrast, groups are for '…members of groups to connect, share and even collaborate on a given topic or idea'. Groups can serve as an extremely effective marketing tool to build awareness around various ideas.

Benefits of setting up a group page are that you:
- Can send messages directly to members' facebook inboxes.
- Gives users the ability to restrict who can access the group with three types of group: **open**, **closed**, and **secret**. **Open** groups function just like facebook pages: anybody can join them. **Closed** groups will appear in facebook search results: however, group administrators must approve all members of the group before users can access content. **Secret** groups are not visible in a facebook search results and are accessed by invite only. In contrast to groups, individual facebook pages are always public and there is no option to make them private.
- Can send event invites to their members.
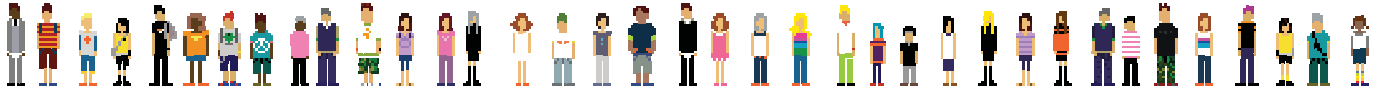
Essential roles for social networking

To make social network sites work for you and your group, regular input is needed. However, if the right resources – people and time – are committed, social networking can be a cheap and effective way of communicating. When starting up your page, there are two essential roles that need to be allocated:

- **Administrator:** multiple administrators can be used if wished for, with particular tasks allocated to particular administrators. For example, one administrator can monitor what is being posted onto the 'wall' (the area of the page where people can leave messages and comments, like a virtual notice board) while one administrator can be in charge of events.

- **Moderator:** someone who is responsible for monitoring comments made by the public to the page to ensure anything posted online meets the explicit conditions of use. It is the moderator's responsibility to remove comments that breach these rules e.g. such as the posting of racist or bigoted comments.

Levels of access

Different levels of access – open, closed and secret – can be used when setting up your page. You might find it helpful to use open settings from the start to encourage participation and involvement. However, if you decide to set up an open page, you must ensure that the administrator/moderator has

some control over content to ensure offensive comments do not jeopardise your site.

Event organising

Social networking sites are an excellent way to build awareness and increase participation at religion and belief events. You may find you attract a whole new audience by using this technology, particularly amongst younger people and those who have not aligned themselves to any particular belief.

What you need to think about when organising an event

There are a couple of things that you should take into consideration when organising an event:

- **Who will you invite?** With social networking it is very easy to invite all of the people who have joined the site to your events. But you may not wish to be restricted to these people and, while it is possible to send invitations through your page to those people not signed up to the site, doing this can be more complex. Specifically, you will need to continue to use another platform (such as e-mail) alongside the site. This will ensure that those who choose not to join the site are not excluded.

- Think about using **voting options** when sending out invitations through facebook– for example **will attend/may attend/will not attend**.

Keep your page 'ticking over'. That is to say, keep updating it with relevant new information and people will keep coming back to the site. While smaller groups may not have a large events programme, the following ideas might help you to keep an active presence on your site:

- Post links to other relevant events happening in your area.

- Share inspirational quotes by posting them to the site.

- Post news and information relevant to your group.

- Share relevant photographs – links from photo sharing sites can be posted.

Social networking sites can be very beneficial to your local interfaith group or network and can connect people at little or no financial cost.
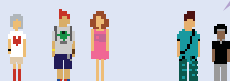
CREATING A NEWSLETTER

A newsletter can be an effective and creative way of communicating information, updating people about events, engaging with the public and increasing awareness of the aims and activities of your group or network.

Here are some key things to think about when setting up a newsletter for the first time:

■ **Define the goal of your newsletter.** What is it for? To educate? To inform? To draw new visitors to your group? To advertise your website? The newsletter's purpose will influence how it's written and distributed.

■ **Set up your team.** Think about who can carry out each role. You will need, as a minimum:

   ■ An **editor or editorial group** – final decisions over content and design will lie here.

   ■ A **designer** – someone with good design/desktop publishing skills.

■ **Decide on format.** Will it be a magazine? A smaller newspaper format? An e-newsletter only? E-newsletters have some benefits over paper newsletters. They are much cheaper than paper newsletters and more environmentally friendly. However, a physical paper newsletter format ensures those without access to e-mail will still be included.

■ **Identify your content.** What topics will you cover? How broad will your coverage be? If you can be flexible in content and size, one issue can be different to the next and creative design and presentation ideas can be used on each issue. The bottom line, however, is that getting the content of the newsletter right is the single most important aspect of creating the newsletter. Ultimately, it is this which will attract or deter readers:

■ A variety of content should be included such as news, features, letters to the editor and opinion pieces.

■ Photographs can be used to make the newsletter attractive and eye-catching.

■ Long paragraphs of text can be off-putting to a reader so keep them concise and break them up with photographs and the use of white (empty) space.

■ A calendar of events including both events organised by the group and external events of interest to your readership.

■ Information on upcoming consultations and changes to legislation which relate to the readership.

■ Guest feature pieces, for example from members of belief communities, universities, other representatives in the community.
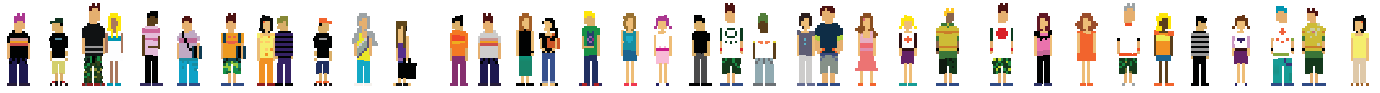
Identify the target audience. Who are they and what do they want to know? How will the newsletter serve them? If you are writing for young people, for example, or people with little knowledge of your work, make sure the writing style is one they will connect with.

Think about how often it will be produced. You need to know how long it will take to write and edit content and set it up in the newsletter. How often it is produced will also be dependent on the size and capacity of your organisation and the level of activity. Three or four times a year is normal.

Think about how your newsletter will be published. If it is online, make sure you have an email mailing list or a website to post the content. If it is printed, determine if you are mailing the newsletter or placing in a public location. Printed newsletters also require a printer of some sort, whether it's your home or office printer or a professional printer.

Think about how your newsletter will be distributed. If a newsletter is designed using Desk Top Publishing software, it can be distributed in print, in a pdf format for online distribution or both. Think about distributing online, via e-mail, on your organisation's website and via your social networking site. One advantage of this type of distribution is that the people who receive your newsletter can forward it on to others very easily. When distributing hard copy newsletters, identify key people who can provide you with extended distribution opportunities and get a commitment from them that they will distribute. This distribution network can be built up over time and can include public sector organisations and libraries.

CREATING A NEWSLETTER

39

FUNDRAISING

There are numerous sources of funding available but it is important to know where to look and how best to go about securing funding. Here are some suggestions:

- **Grants:** a grant is a sum of money provided by a body to a voluntary organisation. It is one of the simplest and most widely used types of formal funding for voluntary organisations. Grants are applied for and awarded for a specific purpose and, as a consequence, have more limitations than a general donation. Applications for grants can be made to a range of funding sources including:

  - Central Government
  - Local Government
  - Non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)
  - the European Union

- **Lottery funding:** a type of grant funded by the National Lottery. 28 pence of each £1 lottery ticket goes to good causes in the UK. National Lottery funding is available through several lottery money distributors such as The Big Lottery Fund, Awards for All Scotland and Creative Scotland (formally the Scottish Arts Council).

- **Membership subscriptions:** Voluntary organisations that have a membership structure often charge a membership subscription which can be an important source of core income. It should be clear what the members receive in return for their subscription, in terms of rights within the organisation and in terms of services.

It is important to find a sensible balance between maximising income while not deterring potential members by over-inflating the costs of joining.

- **Friend schemes:** These are similar to membership in that they are a way of generating stable income from supporters of a voluntary organisation, by inviting them to make a long-term commitment. However, unlike membership, a friend scheme does not automatically confer rights within the organisation. Friend schemes do, however, often involve some sort of beneficial treatment to people in return for their commitment. This might include discount rates for particular services, receipt of a regular newsletter or attendance at events. It is important that the friends feel that the organisation values their support, so acknowledgement in public documents, such as a newsletter or annual report, is a good idea.

- **Grant giving trusts:** These are normally charities themselves who seek to primarily support other charitable causes through the distribution of funding. The term 'trust' and 'foundation' is used interchangeably. Grant-giving trusts do not usually fund core/running costs and salaries but will be looking to fund new and innovative methods of tackling problems, short-term projects or activities for which other forms of fundraising is difficult.

- **Legacy funds/bequests:** Organisations who benefit most from legacies are those who systematically develop and maintain good relationships with their donors. Charities could 'sow seeds' by suggesting to donors that legacies are a good way of supporting their work. If a charity has regular givers, then a legacy is a natural step.

- **Donations:** General donations should be encouraged and organisations would be wise in facilitating them as much as possible. Targeting philanthropists and exploring sponsors or donors from local faith/belief communities is a good way to increase donations.

- **Sponsorship:** sponsorship involves the payment of a fee by the sponsor to another organisation, in return for which the sponsor hopes to benefit. This latter aspect is what distinguishes sponsorship from donations. Sponsorship is very much a mutually beneficial business arrangement between two parties.

Decisions to make when thinking about funding

Two of the key things that any organisation should think about when considering raising funds are whether they should:

- Charge for events or provide them free? Or consider a mixture depending on the event itself? Charging for events may be off-putting to some, and may mean that the event has a smaller audience than it would if it were free.

- Accept donations? Accepting donations should not be allowed to compromise the values and aims of the group. Therefore, the impact of accepting donations from those who seek to dominate the group should be carefully considered.

Service Level Agreements

There is increasing emphasis placed on Service Level Agreements (SLA) which allow organisations to deliver services on behalf of another agency or authority. It is most commonly the public sector that contracts the voluntary sector to deliver services.

SLAs generally relate to specific outcomes or outputs in relation to payment and surplus monies can be 'clawed back' if not fully utilised or not used in line with the purpose that they were provided for.

Any charitable/voluntary organisation should investigate what the national and local outcomes are and decide if the group believes they can make a contribution to achieving those outcomes. If you believe you can, approach the public sector agency, such as the local authority, and ask if you can deliver the work. Demonstrate how you can help the local authority to meet their outcomes – the proposed work can be a small contribution to a large outcome.

The following example will help to explain how a SLA can work:

Type of activity	Delivering through a Service Level Agreement (SLA)
Example	A local inter-faith group feels they can contribute to a number of national outcomes (such as creating strong, resilient communities) and local outcomes (such as creating strong, engaged and supported voluntary and community sectors that enable people to participate in their communities) and wants to engage with the local community to deliver faith awareness programmes at an airport.
Reason	The local inter-faith group realises that they have knowledge and experience in delivering faith awareness sessions and that such events could be delivered in a new and innovative way to increase community cohesion and promote understanding and discussion.
Planning process and hosting event	**The local inter-faith group:** • Examines national and local outcomes and investigates how the group can contribute to achieving these. • Sets up a meeting to discuss what form this contribution could take. • Following a decision to hold airport faith awareness sessions, discusses who the group needs to contact to enable these to happen. • Approaches and establishes supportive working relationships with the local airport manager, community safety and equality officers and the local constabulary to prepare a programme of delivery. **On the day of the Faith Awareness programmes:** • Prepares the area allocated for the programme at the airport beforehand i.e. sets up stand, ensures good position. • Has copies of any key documents/leaflets for handouts. • Politely and courteously engages with members of the public on the issues. • Ensures that they have the contact details of those who wish to find out more about the issues of the work of the local inter-faith group.
Outcome of the event	The general public gain a better understanding of faith communities and the local constabulary benefit from an innovative way of engaging with the community. The local inter-faith group also raises awareness about their own agenda and allows them to become a single-point of contact for the local constabulary in future.
After the event	The local inter-faith group evaluated the awareness programme and reflected on what went well and what could be improved for future events.

APPENDIX 1: RELIGION AND BELIEF STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Scottish Census

The population of Scotland in the 2001 census was 5,062,011. There are a range of ethnicities in Scotland. This is reflected in the diversity of religious and philosophical belief traditions found in the country. The table below is taken from the summary report of the Analysis of Religion in the 2001 Census which was issued by the Office of the Chief Statistician in February 2005. This can be found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20757/53568.

Current Religion in Scotland – All People

	Number (000s)	Percentage (%)
Church of Scotland	2,146.3	42.40
Roman Catholic	803.7	15.88
Other Christian	344.6	6.81
Buddhist	6.8	0.13
Hindu	5.6	0.11
Jewish	6.4	0.13
Muslim	42.6	0.84
Sikh	6.6	0.13
Another Religion	27.0	0.53
All Religions	**3,389.5**	**66.96**
No religion	1,394.5	27.55
Not answered	278.1	5.49
All no religion/Not answered	**1,672.5**	**33.04**
Base	**5,062.0**	**100.00**

The Scottish Census for 2011 also contains a question on religion and the General Register Office for Scotland will publish the information collated through the Census in due course.

Scottish Social Surveys

Questions on religion are asked on all major Scottish social surveys and can be used as a classificatory variable to analyse other aspects of Scottish life. However, limitations in sample sizes generally restricts the analysis that can be carried out and the detail of the information that can be reported.

Scottish Household Survey

The Scottish Household Survey is another source of useful information relating to the Scottish population. The survey aims to provide household and individual information not currently available in Scotland, particularly to support the work of Communities, Transport and Local Government areas and the work of the Scottish Parliament, and allows detailed follow-up surveys of sub-samples from the main survey sample if required. Information on the Scottish Household survey can be found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002/SurveyDetails.

Scottish Health Survey

The Scottish Health Survey provides information about the health of people all over Scotland which cannot be attained from other sources. This includes information about lifestyles as well as health. Information on the Scottish Health Survey can be found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Health/scottish-health-survey.

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey provides information on peoples experiences of crime, including services provided to victims of crime. The survey assesses the varying risk of crime for different groups of people in the populations. An important role of the survey is to provide an alternative and complementary measure of crime to the police recorded crime statistics. Information on the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey can be found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/crime-and-justice-survey.

Annual Population Survey

The Annual Population Survey has the biggest sample size for Scotland and would be the survey that offers the most up-to-date population figures on religion and belief communities in Scotland. However, unlike in other Scottish social surveys, the Annual Population Survey does not gather information on Christian denominations. More information can be found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/Publications.

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey

The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey has been designed as an annual Scottish sister survey to the British Social Attitudes Survey. Like the British Social Attitudes series, the survey aims to chart and interpret attitudes on a range of social, political, economic and moral issues. The survey is carried out by the National Centre for Social Research in conjunction with the Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland at the University of Edinburgh. The survey focuses mainly on people's attitudes but also collects details of their behaviour patterns, household circumstances and work.

Information on the survey can be found at: http://www.esds.ac.uk/government/ssa/.

Questions on religion are also asked in other Scottish social surveys. More information can be found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/scotlandsurveys.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

COPFS publish information on religiously and racially aggravated crimes which can be found at: http://www.crownoffice.gov.uk/about/summary-copfs-statistics-offences-aggravated-religious-prejudice-2003-2009 and http://www.copfs.gov.uk/About/Departmental-Overview/diversity/racist-crime/Statistics0506.

Please note that queries about the information published in the above reports should be directed to the organisations which publish the information.

APPENDIX 2: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This appendix has been designed to give you an outline of the legislative framework (that is to say, the laws) which protect people from discrimination because of religion or belief. While we have talked throughout this guide about beliefs as including religious and non-religious beliefs, it is important to be aware that legislation use the terminology 'religion or belief'.

The Equality Act 2010

The most recent legislation in this area is the Equality Act 2010, which came into force from October 2010. Prior to this Act coming into effect, equality legislation included a large number of Acts and statutory instruments. This has now been replaced with a single Act to simplify, harmonise and strengthen the legislation.

The Equality Act 2010 carries forward the rights and responsibilities in familiar legislation and has replaced the following Acts.

- the Equal Pay Act 1970

- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975

- the Race Relations Act 1976

- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

- the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

- the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

- the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

- the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Religion and Belief

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination because of religion or religious or philosophical belief.

To be protected, a person must belong to a religion that has a clear structure and belief system. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered a protected religion or religious belief, for instance Protestants and Catholics within Christianity.

A philosophical belief must satisfy various criteria, including that it is a belief about a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour – so, for example, humanism is a philosophical belief.

People are also protected from being discriminated against because of lack of religion or belief, so they cannot be treated less favourably because they do not follow a certain religion or have no religion or belief at all.

Discrimination because of religion or belief can occur even where both the discriminator and victim share the same religion or belief – for example, discrimination on grounds of being Sunni or Shia within Islam, or discrimination on grounds of being Protestant or Catholic within Christianity.

Further information

Equality legislation is reserved to the UK Government. A range of guidance has been published to help public bodies, employers and community and voluntary organisations understand the rights and responsibilities in the Equality Act 2010. These can be accessed at: http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/equality_act_2010_what_do_i_n.aspx .

The Human Rights Act

The Human Rights Act 1998 (also known as, 'the Act' or the HRA) came into force in the United Kingdom in October 2000. It is composed of a series of sections that have the effect of codifying the protections in the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. All public bodies (such as courts, police, local governments, hospitals, publicly funded schools, and others) and other bodies carrying out public functions have to comply with the Convention rights.

The Human Rights Act protects your right to have your own thoughts, beliefs and religion. This includes the right to change your religion or beliefs at any time. You also have the right to put your thoughts and beliefs into action. For example, public authorities cannot stop you practising your religion or belief, publicly or privately, without very good reason, as outlined in the restrictions. Importantly, this right protects a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs including veganism, pacifism, agnosticism and atheism.

Article 9 of the Human Rights Act: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 9 states that:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching practice and observance.

- Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

- This right has a special significance under the Human Rights Act. Section 13 of the Act requires courts or tribunals, when they are hearing cases which may impact on the exercise of this right by a religious organisation, to have 'particular regard to the importance of that right'.
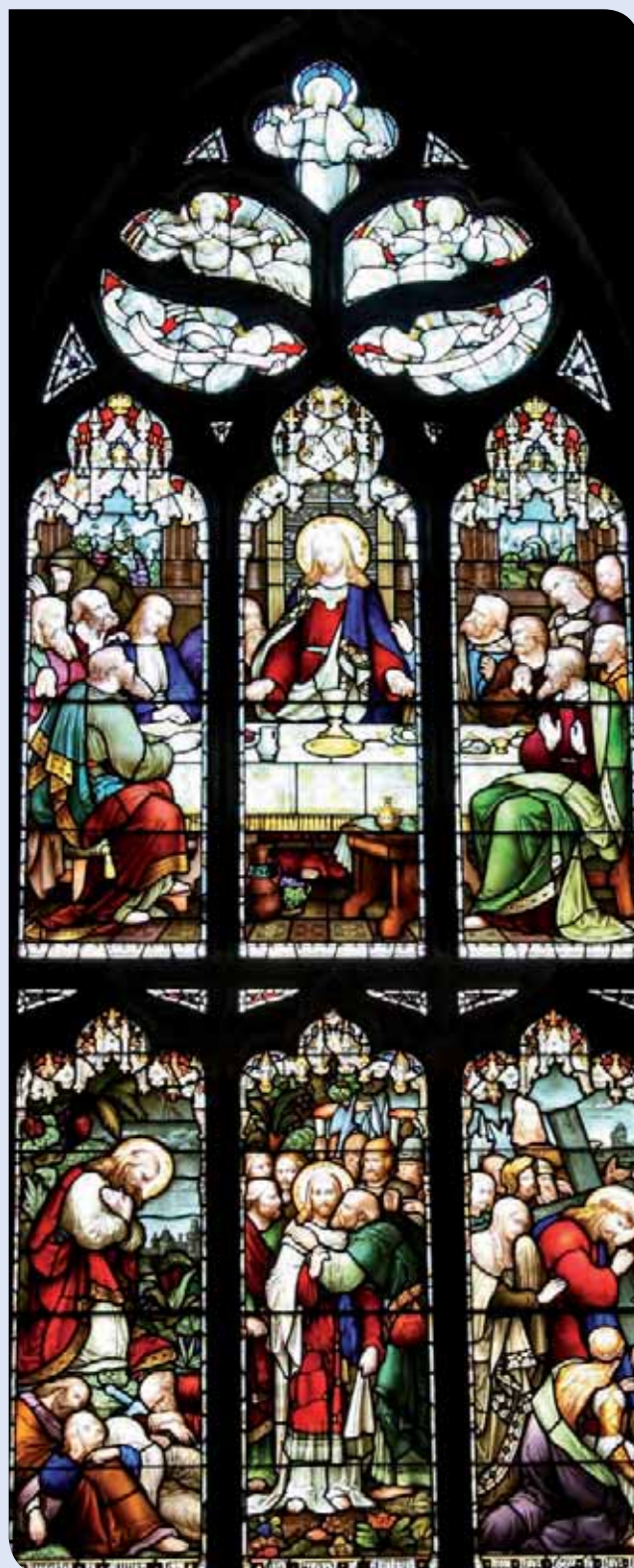
Religious Prejudice Aggravations

Under section 74 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003, which came into force on 27 June 2003, an offence is aggravated by religious prejudice where the alleged conduct was aggravated by some form of malice or ill will based on the victim's membership of a religious group.

Useful Links:

The Equality and Human Rights Commission: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/about-us/vision-and-mission/our-business-plan/religion-belief-equality/

http://www.copfs.gov.uk/about/crime-aggravated-religious-prejudice

APPENDIX 2: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

47

APPENDIX 3: DISCUSSION AND CONSULTATION

This Good Practice Guide was developed with the support of consultations which took place as the document was being prepared. Members of the Scottish Working Group on Religion and Belief Relations consulted various organisations and individuals involved in dialogue, including those involved in equality work and people from religious and non-religious belief communities, to support the development of this guide.

Consultations and discussions were carried out with Scottish religious leaders, religious and belief communities, The Humanist Society of Scotland, Action of Churches Together in Scotland, The Churches Agency for Inter–faith Relations in Scotland, the Pagan Federation, local inter-faith groups, Equality Officers from local authorities, the Scottish Inter-Faith Council, through the Central Scotland Police 'Faith and Community Event', the Parliamentary Equal Opportunities Committee, Fife Fire and Rescue Service, Officer of the NHS Spiritual Care Development Committee, and through a roundtable discussion on religion and belief organised by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. A special effort was made to involve young people in the discussions and so youth events involving senior students from Scottish schools, Sense over Sectarianism, Shetland College and the Youth Steering Committee of the Scottish Inter-Faith Council were organised.

The discussions focussed on what needs to be set in place to allow for dialogue among and between belief groups, the obstacles and issues that need to be faced to ensure harmonious living between belief communities, and the kind of dialogue and activities that would need to be set in place for this to happen.

All respondents recognised the need for belief groups to get to know and understand one another. While there can be misunderstanding among individual belief groups and those which may appear to have the same life view, there can also be a lack of understanding between belief groups which have differing life views. This is highlighted by what the media often portrays as antagonistic and irreconcilable differences between religious and non-religious belief groups.

Often religious groups feel that non-religious belief groups are anti-religion at all levels, including the assumption that non-religious belief groups want to deny them their individual right to their faith. In turn, non-religious belief groups can assume that religious groups simply 'toe the party line' rather than being open to debate on controversial or difficult topics like same sex marriage, gay adoption or abortion. These are stereotyped views and, like all stereotypes, it is misleading and inaccurate to apply them to groups and communities as a whole. In particular, such views fail to acknowledge the variance and breadth of views which often exist within individual belief communities and groups. Dialogue is the key to breaking these stereotypes and to finding the common ground which allows those of all beliefs to work together for the common good of Scotland, and to upholding everyone's right to freedom of thought, equality and a peaceful life.

The consultations demonstrated that people of diverse beliefs working together could be powerful agents of change within Scotland. In particular, world events often lead to tensions between communities and judgements are made about people's beliefs and affiliations, sometimes as a result of negative media portrayal. At times like this, dialogue is essential for the wellbeing of all.

It was concluded that there should be opportunities to bring people together for dialogue and conversation, but that training might be necessary for this to be truly productive. Education was another area that many respondents highlighted. Young people, especially, spoke of the need for good religious and philosophical education in schools as a way of breaking down barriers and overcoming prejudice. This was also true of public bodies that needed to be trained in the awareness of the diverse beliefs in Scotland.

The Working Group took the responses from the various consultees very seriously when preparing the Guide, and included information, such as suggestions for opportunities for dialogue and ground rules for positive engagement, on the basis of the response to the consultations. This guide is a direct outcome of the consultations.

APPENDIX 4: RESOURCES AND USEFUL CONTACTS

When taking forward dialogue between diverse belief communities, you may wish to look at the following websites to consider whether the ideas in them could be used or adapted for the particular groups and issues you will be working with:

Religion and Belief Resources

Local inter-faith groups

Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs

http://www.interfaith.org.uk

The Local Inter-Faith Guide: Faith Community Co-operation in Action Second Edition

http://www.interfaith.org.uk

How to build an Inter-religious Council (Manual)

http://www.religionsforpeace.org/

The Spectrum

www.stethulburgas.org

Women's inter-faith initiatives

Guide to Building Women of Faith Networks

http://www.religionsforpeace.org/

Inter-faith youth groups, youth organisations and schools

Connect: Different Faiths Shared Values
http://www.interfaith.org.uk

Useful Websites

Diversiton
http://www.diversiton.com/

BBC Religion
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/

The Religious Education Movement Scotland (REMS)
http://remscotland.org.uk/

For additional information on meeting the needs of individuals with particular requirements you may wish to refer to:

'Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service, Staff Consolidated Guide on Disability' http://www.copfs.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/Staff-Consolidated-Guide-Disability

Age UK
www.ageuk.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Blind
www.rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf
www.rnid.org.uk

See Me Scotland
www.seemescotland.org.uk

Capability Scotland
www.capability-scotland.org.uk

50

APPENDIX 5:
THE SCOTTISH WORKING GROUP ON RELIGION AND BELIEF RELATIONS

Background and membership

The Scottish Working Group on Religion and Belief Relations (the Working Group) was established by Fergus Ewing MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Community Safety, to promote dialogue between religious and non-religious belief communities.

The original intention was for the Working Group to carry out a consultation with key stakeholders and partners for the purpose of developing a strategic framework on religion and belief relations. The consultation revealed that, while there was a strong desire for such dialogue to take place, the need was for practical guidance to support this rather than a high level framework. The Working Group responded positively to this and re-focused their objectives to produce a practical guidance document to meet the needs of belief communities.

Group membership

Sister Isabel Smyth, SND (Chair) has a long background in inter-faith work having been a member of the Glasgow Sharing of Faiths Group for thirty years. She was the founding Director and Chief Executive of the Scottish Inter-Faith Council and was awarded an OBE in 2007 for her work in inter-faith relations.

Farkhanda Chaudhry MBE has contributed to the development of training manuals focusing on religious diversity, Islamophobia and working within Muslim communities to combat poverty. She is currently the Vice-Convener of the Muslim Council of Scotland.

Rev. Tom Macintyre is a minister of the Church of Scotland and has been involved in school and community projects throughout his career in Glasgow, Ayrshire, Paisley and Shetland. He served as vice-convener of the Scottish Inter-Faith Council and is presently Chaplain to Shetland College (UHI) and chairperson of Shetland Inter-Faith Group.

Ron McLaren has held various executive roles in the Humanist Society of Scotland (HSS) since 2004. He gained registered celebrant status in 2001 and is committed to achieving parity of esteem for those of a non-religious life view. He is currently the Convener/Secretary of the Dundee HSS group.

Sharon Schlesinger has represented the Jewish Community of Glasgow on inter-faith matters for 10 years. She is a founder member of the Scottish Association of Jewish Teachers and member of the Scottish Government's working party on religious observance in schools.

Dr. Maureen Sier taught sociology and history at the National University of Samoa before becoming the Development Officer for the Scottish Inter-Faith Council. She set up the Scotland America Faith Exchange, is a member of the Co-ordinating Committee of the European Women of Faith Network (World Religions for Peace), and serves as Vice Chair of the Baha'i Council for Scotland.

Victor Spence jointly co-ordinated Scotland's bid to host the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions, is the visit co-ordinator in Scotland to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and is the Secretary to the Conference of Edinburgh's Religious Leaders. He is Co-Director of the Edinburgh Festival of Spirituality and Peace and a consultant to the World Peace Prayer Society (Europe) HQ Tokyo, Japan.

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