Let's Talk:

Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue

The Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom

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2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH

ifnet@interfaith.org.uk

www.interfaith.org.uk

www.twitter.com/IFNetUK

www.facebook.com/IFNetUK

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The Inter Faith Network for the UK

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

IFN's role is unique: linking national faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, and academic and educational bodies with a focus on inter faith or multi-faith issues and working with them to deepen inter faith understanding and cooperation. It carries out its work through raising awareness within wider society of the importance of inter faith issues, creating opportunities for linking and sharing good practice, and providing advice and information to help the development of new inter faith initiatives and the strengthening of existing ones. Working with its nearly 200 member bodies is an important part of this. Each of those makes its own contribution to inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK.

To find out more or to support IFN's work of promoting inter faith understanding and cooperation, please visit www.interfaith.org.uk.

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RESPECT EDUCATION DIALOGUE INTEGRITY VALUES
COMMUNITY COOPERATION DISTINCTIVENESS ACTION
BELONGING COMMON GOOD FAITH UNDERSTANDING
NEIGHBOURLINESS TACKLING PREJUDICE RESPECT

Foreword

The vision of the Inter Faith Network for the UK is of a society where there is understanding of the diversity and richness of the faith communities in the UK and the contribution that they make; and where we live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good.

Inter faith understanding and cooperation are a vital part of living together well and developing the UK as a harmonious and integrated society. This booklet is about dialogue, which is at the heart of inter faith engagement. In a world where voices of intolerance and even hatred seem ever louder, this could not be more timely.

Ignorance, prejudice and even hatred stand a greater chance of taking hold or increasing in the absence of dialogue. Conversely, where there is dialogue there is a greater chance of trust and good relationships developing.

Inter faith dialogue plays an important role for those within religious traditions, as well as those of non-religious beliefs, as part of coming to an understanding about how our own traditions' teachings, practices and understandings of truth may relate to those of others. It is also very important for tackling issues of common concern and for addressing difficult issues constructively.

We are grateful to the member bodies of IFN for their assistance in the development of *Let's Talk* and we look forward, with a view to future website material, to hearing from readers about their ideas and experiences.

We are also grateful to those whose support has made this publication possible, including faith communities, the Department for Communities and Local Government, trusts, and individual donors.

We hope that you will find this resource useful.

The Trustees of the Inter Faith Network

"Listening, explaining, learning, moving forward with greater understanding - effective dialogue is a cornerstone of developing our shared life in a diverse world."

THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE INTER FAITH NETWORK

Rt Revd Richard Atkinson and Jatinder Singh Birdi, Co-Chairs, Inter Faith Network *(Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)*

Welcome to 'Let's Talk'

Using this booklet

If you are reading this booklet you may be someone who is hoping to get involved in dialogue with those of other backgrounds for the first time or someone who is working to develop or deepen a particular dialogue on behalf of your organisation or community. The booklet is designed to offer some helpful pointers for both types of reader.

The IFN office gets many enquiries every year – a number specifically relating to dialogue. At IFN's meetings many other relevant questions are raised and experiences shared. This booklet draws on that experience, and on relevant IFN publications. It also draws on responses from a wide range of its member bodies to a survey which asked them about different aspects of dialogue, and invited them to reflect on their experiences.

Many detailed books have been written about 'dialogue' and this booklet does not aim to provide such in depth academic grounding. Nor does it take the place of the deep reflections on inter religious dialogue produced from within faith communities and specialist institutions. Rather, it offers some short reflections and examples drawn from the work of IFN and its member bodies, with the aim of inspiring and encouraging further discussion and engagement.

Section 1 asks 'Why dialogue?' Section 2 provides a brief overview of some of the kinds of dialogue and contexts for these found in the UK today.

Sections 3 and 4 are the heart of the booklet. They look at some of the practicalities of dialogue, such as what may make for effective and successful dialogues and how difficult issues may best be approached.

Section 5 asks how the circles of dialogue can be widened.

Section 6 highlights some useful IFN resources and gives details of its member bodies, which provide a wealth of opportunities and resources for dialogue. A list of National Faith Community Representative member bodies, and their web addresses, is included in this section, along with short profiles and contact details for its member National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations and Educational and Academic Bodies. Local inter faith organisations are too numerous to list here and so details on how to find and contact these are provided through the local inter faith locator on IFN's website at www.interfaith.org.uk/locator. There is also a chart giving an 'at a glance' overview of aspects of inter faith activity carried out by IFN's member National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations and Educational and Academic Bodies, to help the reader find out who to contact depending on their particular interests.

In other contexts, IFN has looked in some depth at particular dialogues, including women's inter faith dialogue and youth inter faith dialogue. These are touched on in this booklet, but, like other specific

dialogues, are not covered in detail. A forthcoming IFN publication will be focusing in particular on youth inter faith engagement.

For those who would like to become involved in other aspects of inter faith engagement, such as joint social action, IFN's recent publication *Inter Faith Learning Dialogue and Cooperation: Next Steps* and its joint publication with Near Neighbours, *Faiths Working Together Toolkit*, are recommended. Details can be found in the Resources section.

Terminology

Dialogue

Where the term 'dialogue' is used here it is with the meaning of conversation or written exchange which is a mutually respectful exploration of views with the hoped for outcome of greater understanding.

The guidelines at pages 26–27 offer IFN's framework for inter faith dialogue. They are aimed at helping to create the conditions for an exchange which is characterised by respectful and honest engagement, careful and courteous listening and a shared commitment to the process of seeking greater understanding.

There is a significant difference between 'dialogue' and 'debate'. 'Debate' is a form of discourse which involves a forensic probing of weaknesses in another's position and arguing for one's own. Learning and clarity can come from this but the process is very different from 'dialogue'.

Not everyone finds the term 'dialogue' a helpful one; some prefer 'conversation' or 'discussion'. Those terms are also used in some contexts in this booklet. However, they do not always convey the full weight of what is intended by 'dialogue', which is why that term is used.

Inter faith

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

'Inter faith' discussion often seeks to establish areas of agreement but the term 'inter faith' is not used here to imply lessening the distinctiveness of traditions.

It should be noted that some prefer to speak of 'inter faith and belief' or 'inter belief' where people of non-religious beliefs are involved in dialogue.

Multi faith

The term 'multi faith' is used here of dialogues to describe inter faith dialogues between those involving several faiths.

It should be noted that some use 'multi faith' to describe projects or organisations where the emphasis is on joint working rather than interaction.

Inter-Faith Council for Wales members in dialogue *(Photo: IFN)*

Participants in dialogue at an IFN day event for local inter faith practitioners, Coventry *(Photo: IFN)*

Student leaders from The Council of Christians and Jews Campus Leadership Programme on a training weekend *(Photo: CCJ)*

"If we don't meet each other, we won't communicate.
"If we don't communicate, we won't know or understand.
"If we don't know or understand, our relationships – if they exist at all – will be impoverished and little misunderstandings will be capable of provoking or perpetuating conflict."

NORTHERN IRELAND INTER FAITH FORUM

"Talking, listening and mutual understanding are fundamental to human meaning, identity and survival. Faiths and beliefs are intrinsic and universal to this entire process."

SHAP WORKING PARTY ON WORLD RELIGIONS IN EDUCATION

1. Why Dialogue?

Here are just some of the reasons that people have said that they have become involved in dialogue:

The importance of dialogue

IFN asked its member bodies why they thought inter faith dialogue was important. Here are a few of their thoughts:

"In an increasingly diverse society, it is essential for people of different faiths and beliefs to encounter one another, engage in dialogue and work together in social action. Our respective faiths shape how we interact with the world; if we learn about each other's faiths we come closer together, making a difference to the challenges our communities face."

COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

"Inter faith dialogue is essential in our world today because there is so much ignorance about each other's ways, beliefs and practices and so many people spread false reports and rumours about others and other groups. These only lead to greater prejudice and misunderstanding. It is only by learning the truth from each other and by meeting each other that we can allay fears and start to build true links and relationships with each other for the benefit of our society."

FAITH NETWORK 4 MANCHESTER

"You can store up a vast amount of distorted ideas about other faiths and people, which can be used to alienate them and even demonise them, thus justifying any hatred you develop. Opening yourself up to face to face dialogue makes you realise that they are human and just like you."

WELWYN HATFIELD INTER FAITH GROUP

"All religions teach good things in life: non-violence, truth, honesty, compassion, amity and such. It is only misinterpretation through ignorance which causes problems. Dialogues can help improve understanding."

INSTITUTE OF JAINOLOGY

"Interfaith dialogue and community cohesion work are major priorities of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. We know that building good relations between communities can proactively prevent tensions, racism and violence. Dialogue is always an important first step towards interfaith cooperation, whether in new or ongoing contexts. By opening up conversations, we can help break down the misconceptions and prejudices that can pose a challenge to the cohesiveness of our society."

BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS

"Interfaith dialogue is an opportunity for us to discuss significant matters with other communities. It is also an important context to share the beliefs held by Hindus and how these shape our lives, promoting better understanding, respect and harmony."

HINDU COUNCIL UK

"Dialogue breaks down barriers, crosses boundaries, and helps to tackle prejudice, ignorance, misinformation and fear."

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

The importance of dialogue

"It is very easy to make assumptions about people. It is surprising how often when you actually speak together that you realise the background and see that misunderstandings have arisen."

HOUNSLOW FRIENDS OF FAITH

"Talking about diverse beliefs and views on particular issues in safe environments allows for deeper understanding to develop between religious traditions, often challenging stereotypes and getting to the heart of what really motivates communities to work together for the common good."

INTERFAITH SCOTLAND

"Only through open and honest dialogue can we ever hope to find the common ground that connects all faiths."

THE DRUID NETWORK

"Because we learn best about other faiths through engaging with authentic representatives of other faiths; because there is much to learn; because there is great value in friendship despite difference; because there are many common causes and values over which we can unite our voices and influence in the public sphere."

YORK INTERFAITH GROUP

"Dialogue helps us understand each other better and enables us to deepen our bond of friendship."

SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

"What is unknown is often feared and almost as often misunderstood. Through dialogue we can get to know each other and what we believe. True dialogue will allow us to correct misunderstandings and by getting to know each other can lead to a building up of trust and cooperation in communities."

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND FAITHS FORUM

"In today's world with its easy access to internet hatred and 'fake' news it is even more important that we learn about other faiths and dispel misunderstandings about our own particular faith and thus try to overcome the religious and racial hatred that blights our lives."

INTER-FAITH COUNCIL FOR WALES/CYNGOR CYD-FFYDD CYMRU

"Dialogue is a fundamental necessity of a democratic multi-faith society."

JOSEPH INTERFAITH FOUNDATION

"With all the misinformation and scaremongering at the moment it is more important than ever for faith groups to get together and talk – about similarities and differences, successes and failures – if they are to improve understanding, break down barriers and strengthen bonds of friendship."

WAKEFIELD INTERFAITH GROUP

"With dialogue there is a chance of friendship and an ability to work together for the good of all."

NETWORK OF BUDDHIST ORGANISATIONS (UK)

2. Different kinds of dialogue: an overview

The dialogue of daily life

Informal dialogue occurs in the course of ordinary life – for example between classmates talking, co-workers sharing lunch, parents waiting to collect their children from school, a football team in training, or participants in a joint social action project. Such interactions are not usually planned or prepared in advance, and most of the time religion or belief is not the topic of conversation. However, from time to time issues linked to them do arise and significant inter faith dialogue and encounter takes place when conversation turns to each other's faith, how it is practised, and what it means in people's lives.

There are lots of topics that naturally give rise to conversations of this kind – such as births, celebrations, bereavement: the common life experiences that we share. Being present at the festivals and life rituals of our friends, neighbours, work colleagues and others brings us into conversation about those things that matter to us deeply.

"I remember a conversation with a Jain colleague about how she and her husband were choosing the name for their baby, and the way this was done, and the naming ceremony. It was very different from what happens in my tradition (Christian) and we enjoyed discussing it and each got a bit more understanding of each other's world."

Sadly, another reason that people of different backgrounds find themselves in conversation in the course of their day to day encounters can be the impact of global events or problems closer to home on their shared lives.

"A Muslim friend talked about her deep anxiety in this time with so many terrorist attacks where people sometimes look at her suspiciously on the street (she wears a hijab). We ended up talking about a number of aspects of our different faiths and our lives. I learned much and I hope that these conversations also gave her a sense of support at a difficult time."

Not all day to day encounters are positive or benign. Ignorance, impatience, indignation at perceived wrongs and other factors can make the conversation in the workplace, on the bus or elsewhere a negative experience: the reverse of genuine dialogue. For these kinds of reasons, IFN has always been strongly supportive of the development of good multi faith Religious Education and opportunities for positive encounter in shared spaces, as well as other factors which help people of different backgrounds engage well with one another. This practically focused booklet cannot explore in any detail issues such as equality, social justice and responsible media coverage but as IFN documents such as *Faith, Citizenship and Shared Life In Britain Today* underline, they affect the ways in which people engage with

each other and need to be addressed alongside cross-community and inter personal relationships.

The dialogue of action

Some dialogues arise in the course of projects set up to increase community cohesion and/or through such contexts as joint social action.

Community project dialogues can be close in their nature to 'the dialogue of daily life' – rooted in the process of neighbourly encounter. Examples include the projects currently being funded by the Near Neighbours Programme. 'Faithful friendships' is one of the themes of its work. The following example is from work with it by one of its partners – the Christian Muslim Forum.

"Jenny and Saraya met through a Christian Muslim Forum residential conference. They spoke to each other for 30 seconds in an ice-breaker game and discovered both had the same favourite colour – blue. The group of women who met at the conference continues to meet at events and for meals in each other's homes. Recently Saraya organised a collection for harvest working with Jenny's church. The collection by ISRA-Feed The Poor and All Saints' King's Heath brought in 235 kgs of food – enough to provide 450 meals."

NEAR NEIGHBOURS

"There is more that binds us together than keeps us apart. We have daughters the same age and we have lots to talk about. It's about building bridges, not walls."

Saraya and Jenny in dialogue *(Photo: Dharmendra Patel, Outroslide Photography)*

Mitzvah Day, Sadaqa Day, Sewa Day and Inter Faith Week annually see people of different backgrounds working on projects together with many personal dialogues happening during the day – and often resulting in longer term friendships, discussion and cooperation.

Participants in conversation at Northampton Inter Faith Forum conference *(Photo: IFN)*

Three special days

- 'Mitzvah Day' (www.mitzvahday.org.uk) is a Jewish-led day of social action which encourages inter faith involvement. The objective is to encourage people to give their time, rather than their money, to worthwhile local causes, whilst also creating deeper linkages within communities and supporting charities.
- Sadaqa Day (www.mysadaqaday.org) is a day of social action led by Muslim community for individuals, community groups, mosques, women's groups, schools and families. Organisations and individuals from other faiths have also joined in.
- Sewa Day (www.sewaday.org) is an international day of social action where people come together to do good in their communities. The term 'sewa' is rooted in the dharmic traditions; although the involvement is wider.

"The dialogue that arises through action, in the course of faith communities working together for social justice, can be a very powerful one resulting in informed and strengthened engagement together for the common good."

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

Ongoing joint social action through routes such as community organising and cooperation on particular issues such as health, justice or the environment also sparks conversations of a profound kind. Likewise, dialogues can give rise to joint action:

"This year we have started running interfaith dialogues at the local universities. After two good introductory events at one of the universities, the actual dialogues have started, initially with small numbers but increasing significantly each time. There were lots of really good questions, open and honest discussion and a noticeable excitement for the next session and to continue this type of engagement in the following year. There was also keen interest in engaging in joint projects together, in particular charitable and social action projects, which are being arranged in the near future."

FAITH NETWORK 4 MANCHESTER

"We consider that in an inter faith context it is very important to work together with other religious groups for the social and economic benefit of the community. Dialogue with others can be an important part of the process of joint working, helping us understand each other's bases for action."

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Above, left and right: Participants in dialogue at an IFN day event for local inter faith practitioners, Bristol *(Photo: IFN)*

Structured inter faith dialogues

Some dialogues are ongoing and involve a commitment to talking together over a significant period of time or on a continuing basis. The participants, contexts and topics will vary. They may have a theological, philosophical, spiritual, ethical or social dimension or may have a number of these simultaneously. Participants may be of various kinds, for example, institutions of particular communities, scholars of different faiths, academics, interested individuals, consultative secular bodies seeking to gauge the views of faith and belief bodies, or particular groups such as women, young people or workplace colleagues.

Local inter faith dialogues

In local communities around the UK there are a wide range of initiatives which bring people together in dialogue. These include over 250 local inter faith bodies in the UK. You can find the nearest ones to you at www.interfaith.org.uk/locator.

The discussions and dialogues that these local inter faith bodies arrange help people to learn more about each other's beliefs and practices and develop awareness of differences and commonalities. Sometimes ongoing discussions will focus on particular local issues and may take place in the context of a consultation exercise by the local authority or other public agencies.

"The Councilof Faiths has played an important role in uniting people from all faith communities so that the challenges they face can be tackled together. It organises events so that the people have opportunity for sharing their traditions and values. At the heart of this is the opportunity for open and honest dialogue which is at the heart of Newcastle being a City for Peace. Such events and opportunities have helped different communities live in peace and harmony."

NEWCASTLE COUNCIL OF FAITHS

"A rich source of dialogue for Harrow Interfaith members is the programme of invitations to participate in faith community festivals, services, lectures, gatherings for prayer, joyous celebrations and solemn commemorations."

HARROW INTERFAITH

"We have had several 'Attitude to …' discussions on topics such as food, prayer, death and violence from different faith perspectives, with half a dozen short contributions and lots of open discussion. These have proved informative, enjoyable and thought provoking."

WAKEFIELD INTERFAITH GROUP

"We held a… lecture… on the subject of the financial crisis. Our speakers were Jewish, Christian and Sikh businessmen and the meeting was chaired by our mayor, who is also our patron. They all put forward such strong cases, and answered questions afterwards in such a way that everyone came away with much better understanding of the various ways of working and dealing with finance within faiths and thus gained more understanding of how the faiths work."

WATFORD INTERFAITH ASSOCIATION

Faith leaders in dialogue at a meeting with the First Minister of Scotland *(Photo: Interfaith Scotland)*

National level dialogues

In the last twenty five years dialogues involving national faith community bodies, and in some cases also non-religious belief bodies, have become increasingly common.

Most national faith communities are, from time to time, involved in institutional dialogue, whether through their own engagement in a particular dialogue or through inter faith bodies in which they play a role. The dialogue may be theological or historical or on matters of social concern. Some discussions focus on particular topics, such as responses to hate crime, the environment or organ donation.

Communities Minister, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth consulting round table of faith leaders on integration

National faith communities

Sometimes dialogues are initiated by individual faith communities or denominations or leaders within these.

"Baha'is work to create spaces in local communities for people of all backgrounds to come together, to pray and consult on the spiritual and material needs of their communities and to be in dialogue. This is rooted in the injunction in our scriptures to 'Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship'. Effective public dialogue is also vital and the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Baha'i Faith recently held a seminar on the role of dialogue in promoting social cohesion."

BAHA'I COMMUNITY OF THE UK

IFN Faith Communities Forum in discussion with DCLG official about tackling hate crime *(Photo: IFN)*

"We host, participate in and encourage our members to engage with inter faith dialogue. It is a necessity for creating a harmonious society and pluralism (anekaantavaada) is one of the core principles of Jainism which teaches tolerance, co-existence and respect for the beliefs of others."

JAIN NETWORK UK

National faith community bodies are part of worldwide communities and the issues that they explore will also reflect that.

"CTBI is working with the Board of Deputies of British Jews in bringing together synagogues and churches for honest conversations about peace building and reconciliation in Israel-Palestine."

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Inter faith organisations

Inter faith organisations, including dedicated inter faith centres, arrange opportunities for dialogue and help support or arrange dialogues. These may be about religious themes or aspects of living together in a multi faith society.

IFN's Faith Communities Forum is an example of dialogue between national bodies. It meets four times a year. Through it, representatives from IFN's member National Faith Community Representative Bodies come together to discuss matters of mutual concern. Topics recently on its agenda include national faith communities' approach to inter faith engagement; tackling hate crime; responding to the needs of refugees; and integration.

In youth contexts

Dialogues in the school classroom are very important. Religious Education enables young people to have the chance to develop skills for dialogue – including on controversial issues. Some schools have developed inter faith groups and dialogues have also taken place through youth forums supported through the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) and Westhill.

Opportunities for dialogue are also found in a number of youth organisation contexts, for example through the JLGB inter faith National Citizen Service programme for Years 11 and 12 (https://www.jlgb.org/ncs) and Girlguiding and Scouting.

Participants in dialogue at IFN's Young Voices, Young Agents for Change event *(Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)*

Participants discussing inter faith engagement on campus and in the workplace at 3FF's Interfaith Summit *(Photo: 3FF)*

Inter faith discussion and dialogue is found in most universities and colleges. Since the early 2000s, student faith organisations, chaplaincies, and the National Union of Students have put considerable energy into this area and individual religion and belief societies on different campuses are increasingly building dialogues into their programmes, including a great many through national Inter Faith Week.

Inter faith organisations with campus programmes, such as the Joseph Interfaith Foundation and the Council of Christians and Jews, also play a very important role.

"CCJ's Campus Leadership Programme arose from requests on campus for assistance in dealing with inter faith work at a time of rising intolerance at universities. For many students university provides an opportunity to engage with students from other faiths. However, mistrust between faith groups and concerns about causing offence can lead students to stay within their faith societies. Such inclusivity among faith groups only serves to increase misunderstanding and stereotypes. The aim is to encourage engagement between faith groups on campus. CCJ appoints and supports Student Leaders to run inter faith initiatives at their universities. By training students to create their own events we ensure that these tackle the current issues faced by students on campus."

COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Among women

Over the last two decades, a number of women's inter faith dialogues have come into being, mostly developed by and for women. Some of these are short term or informal, others, such as those of groups of the Women's Interfaith Network, are long term.

"Women play an increasing role in inter faith dialogues locally and nationally. Many find it very valuable to be part of women's dialogue and WIN's events and local groups help that happen."

THE WOMEN'S INTERFAITH NETWORK.

There are also a number of new women's initiatives emerging, such as the Nisa-Nashim (www.nisanashim.org) group for Jewish-Muslim women's inter faith engagement and the UK Women of Faith Network of Religions for Peace UK (http://www.religionsforpeace.org.uk/about/uk-women-of-faith-network/). They both enable dialogue, and in the case of the former with a project, professional development and social action focus. Interfaith Scotland also has a programme of encouraging dialogue between women of faith.

Participants at a Women's Interfaith Network meeting *(Photo: Women's Interfaith Network)*

Academia

Institutions of Higher Education and specialist institutes have a very important role in hosting and supporting dialogues and in studying the nature and impact of inter faith dialogue itself. A number of UK universities now have departments or centres with a special focus on this, or on closely related fields such as peace studies, reconciliation, mediation, community relations and religious pluralism. In some universities, such as Leeds, whose Community Religions Project is a member of IFN, this work is longstanding. There are also centres with a link to particular faith traditions such as the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies or the Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue at Heythrop College as well as institutes such as the Woolf Institute working directly in the area of dialogue.

"It is vital that we better understand the challenges and complexities surrounding religion and belief both within and between faith communities. As such, it is hard to think of a time when the academic study of inter faith understanding and inter faith dialogue has been more important for our society and collective futures."

THE WOOLF INSTITUTE

The workplace

Workplaces are increasingly taking the role of religion in people's lives more seriously (see: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-guidance-employers). As a result of this, a number of forums in work places are developing, many encouraged and supported by the Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusion. These can enable dialogue between members of staff and leadership teams about how best to support the religious needs of employees in a constructive way that enhances the working environment.

In some cases, employees may talk with each other about their faith traditions and non religious beliefs – what is important to them, how they can mutually support each other and how they can grow in understanding colleagues with whom they share much of their week. Some workplaces, such as Leicester City Council have faith based staff groups which sometimes talk or carry out projects together.

Members of the Leicester City Council Interfaith Taskforce on an Inter Faith Week social action project *(Photo: Leicester City Council)*

Online Dialogue

The widespread adoption of new communication technologies opens up many and varied opportunities for inter faith dialogue. Examples of online spaces being used to engage in dialogue include:

- Dedicated online dialogue programmes
- Online inter faith discussion forums that are open to all
- Closed discussion forums and Facebook groups and Whatsapp discussion groups
- Discussion within the comments columns of platforms such as Youtube

Two-way, three-way and multi faith dialogue

The various types and contexts for dialogue outlined in the previous section may involve two traditions, sometimes three – or many. Terms sometimes used for these kinds are 'bilateral', 'trilateral' and 'multilateral'.

Two-way dialogue – bilateral

Dialogue between people of different faiths sometimes takes place between members of two particular faith communities, especially where there is a historic imperative or a current need. These bilateral dialogues often look at areas of commonality, opportunities for gaining knowledge and developing understanding as well as exploring significant differences.

A number of IFN's member bodies focus on relations between two faiths, and dialogue is an important part of their work. National faith community bodies also have such two-way dialogues as an effective way of coming to know particular communities.

Bilateral dialogue is often used as a method of deep engagement. These conversations can allow participants to have profound exchanges, and to encounter other traditions in detail. Sustained bilateral dialogue can also be a powerful tool through which to tackle specific problems affecting certain groups, historic or otherwise, and to contribute to community cohesion. Bilateral

Council of Imams and Rabbis in dialogue at Joseph Interfaith Foundation event

dialogues allow relationships of trust and friendship to be formed, and these can be transformative for wider society.

"Multi faith dialogue and bilateral dialogue are both needed. Bilateral dialogue helps people to speak together about the things that really matter to them in and between their respective traditions. At the Sion Centre our primary focus is bilateral dialogue (Christian-Jewish). Many more bilateral dialogues are needed."

SION CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE AND ENCOUNTER

"Two-way dialogues can be an opportunity for profound discussion between members of different traditions. The Buddhist Society's centre has, over the years, played host to a number of dialogues of this kind, including a Buddhist-Christian dialogue group with participants from a number of different

strands within each tradition and high level national dialogues between Buddhist and Christian faith leaders."

THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY

Three-way dialogue – trilateral

Usually three-way, 'trilateral', dialogues take place where a number of traditions share some aspects of their religious heritage, teaching or practice. In the UK this is particularly common in the case of the 'Abrahamic' traditions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Multi faith dialogue – multilateral

Dialogue between several faiths, and sometimes non-religious beliefs, is also referred to as 'multilateral' inter faith dialogue. Which groups are involved depends on the context and the demographics of an area. It may also be affected by the policies on engagement of those involved.

Members of IFN's Faith Communities Forum in dialogue *(Photo: IFN)*

It is perhaps the most common form of dialogue at local level, where inter faith bodies generally involve many, if not most, of the faith communities in their areas. It is also the usual basis for dialogues arranged by inter faith organisations with a multi faith membership.

"It is very important that Dharmic traditions are contributors to dialogue and that their perspectives are understood."

COUNCIL OF DHARMIC FAITHS

Multilateral engagement is also very common in dialogues that are between external bodies and public agencies, such as central or local government when they seek to engage with faith communities collectively over issues such as tackling hate crime in the community or the religious needs of refugees or asylum seekers. Multilateral 'consultative dialogues' are, however, often supplemented by bilateral conversations involving political leaders or their officials with individual faith and belief groups to enable a deeper sounding out of views from communities. In this context, a concern among communities can be the pattern of communities involved and whether they are sufficiently well represented and heard in such contexts. Another can be questions around representivity itself and who is able to speak on behalf of particular groups.

3. Some approaches

Dialogues differ greatly in terms of approach and style. Here we highlight five very different approaches.

Sharing of stories

Sometimes, a very informal approach is adopted which is perhaps closer to the dialogue of everyday life – for example the sharing of stories. This approach can help develop friendship and trust.

"Starting with personal stories is always a helpful way to build a container of trust and understanding. It can help develop a richer understanding of the uniqueness of each person's point of view. Inviting participants to share something of the journey by which they came to care about the issue under discussion, or what it means to them, can create a very positive start to dialogue."

ST ETHELBURGA'S CENTRE FOR RECONCILIATION AND PEACE

One local group reflects on how sharing of stories was a very important style of dialogue in their foundational stage:

"For many years we met once a month in a sequence of venues... mostly places of worship of our various faiths. There was a core of people who usually came and got to know each other very well, and others came when it was their venue's turn. There were no set topics; each session started from what members wanted to share, except that, on many occasions when a conversation got so deep that we couldn't do it justice in the time, we would continue it later in the next meeting. There was a very great deal of storytelling, both people's individual stories, and stories told as part of their religious practice. The outcomes were deep friendships, the setting up of a council of faiths, and the development of multi-faith culture in our town."

LOUGHBOROUGH COUNCIL OF FAITHS

Sharing of stories can have significant impact. A young person involved in 3FF commented on involvement in an event:

"Hearing the stories of the fellow speakers further embedded the initial reason I joined 3FF: to humanise religion and beliefs. Hearing the varied and personal journeys of people from differing walks of life allowed me to appreciate the diversity... in all beliefs and all people."

3FF

Dialogue around scriptural texts

An approach which is based on texts and mutual engagement with these is 'Scriptural Reasoning'. This is a means of inter faith engagement where participants meet to read and reflect together on their sacred texts and where dialogue takes place.

A Scriptural Reasoning session at the British Museum *(Photo: Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme)*

"Unlike some forms of inter-faith engagement, it is not about seeking agreement but rather exploring the texts and their possible interpretations across faith boundaries, and learning to 'disagree better'. The result is often a deeper understanding of others' and one's own scriptures, as well as the development of strong bonds across faith communities."

CAMBRIDGE INTER FAITH PROGRAMME

Use of panels and audience/panel discussion

Inter faith bodies, and some others, frequently make use of panels and audience discussion, sometimes followed up by smaller discussion groups, to enter into dialogue on matters of common interest.

"During 2016 Harrow Interfaith promoted a series of Question Times, Dimbleby style, in the Council Chamber of Harrow Civic Centre, whereby scholars from our faiths, three at a time, formed a panel to field wide ranging questions from the audience on matters of belief, tradition and thoughts about topical issues. Panel responses to the questions were invariably deep and thoughtful, prompting spirited contributions and follow up questions from the audience."

HARROW INTERFAITH

Seminars and workshops on particular issues

Seminars with dialogue focused on particular topics are often used for social issues.

"Religions for Peace worked with national faith communities to explore the issue of continued investment in nuclear weapons. A series of multi-faith workshops were held around the UK where people of faith were able to share their religion's teaching on war and conflict. This led to the conclusion that our common security must be achieved without the threat of nuclear weapons. Joint action followed to raise grassroots awareness of the topic of multilateral nuclear disarmament in light of a UN initiative, making resources available and sharing best practice in an area often neglected at a local level."

RELIGIONS FOR PEACE UK

Fast moving 'mini dialogues'

Sometimes dialogues are generated at top speed. 'Speed faithing' is a popular way to talk with people of different faiths and beliefs, and has featured in many campus inter faith events. Quizzes, too, are popular.

"The interfaith quiz night was a youth-led interfaith event and it was astounding how different it felt from our more sedate dialogues. There was music, pizzas, communal chanting of familiar songs, real excitement at the competitiveness of the competition and yet despite what felt like a little chaos there were many meaningful and enjoyable conversations (particularly around the faith based questions in the competition)."

INTERFAITH SCOTLAND

Quiz winners Eastwood High School, Newton Mearns, with Director of Interfaith Scotland at St Ninian's High School, Giffnock

Dialogues in the course of learning events and visits to places of worship

Local faith and inter faith groups often comment that visits to other people's places of worship as part of a faith trail prompt discussions which lead to longer conversations and sometimes to involvement in more formal dialogues. Places of worship are often a good starting point for discussion.

This dialogue may take place as part of a faith trail, walk, or pilgrimage. Talking on the move can be more relaxed and enable the opening up of significant questions in a way that is more comfortable for some people.

"Through the visits organised by the inter faith groups to different places of worship we have sometimes introduced people to one another and given them ways to contact one another directly. Without our opening the door and arranging these events some of the direct communication might not have happened at all, or would have been harder to establish."

ALTRINCHAM INTERFAITH GROUP

Or it may take place through an 'open door day' such those held in Bristol each year or in a context such as the now annual Visit My Mosque day organised by the Muslim Council of Britain.

Some organisers of regular opportunities to visit places of worship have commented that groups often find it more comfortable to host others than to

An inter faith iftar at the Bradford Grand Mosque with the Bishop of Bradford *(Photo: British Muslim Forum)*

visit other places of worship. If you are organising this kind of activity, this is a dynamic to be aware of, and, as one survey respondent put it, to "actively encourage participants to bless others by being gracious guests as well as gracious hosts!"

Dialogue over food

When people meet together over food there is often a special quality to a dialogue. 'Dine at mine' inter faith meals and other inter faith discussions over food – including at festival times and in contexts such as The Big Lunch – can be a great opportunity for dialogue.

'Iftars', when Muslims break the fast at the end of each day in Ramadan, are now regularly the opportunity for them to invite people from other communities to share in food and conversation.

"The Holy Month of Ramadan is an important time for Muslims to reflect on how they relate to other people. The breaking of the fast each day provides opportunities for encounter and dialogue and this can be seen clearly in Mosques that hold inter faith iftars. Often, involving leaders from other faith communities they lead to dialogue on local issues of concern to people of faith and provide a foundation for further discussion and action."

BRITISH MUSLIM FORUM

Festivals in other communities provide similar opportunities.

Students from Edge Hill University in dialogue during a visit to Guru Harkrishan Sahib Gurdwara, Manchester *(Photo: Paul Smalley)*

4. Dialogue Practicalities

Agreeing ground rules for dialogues

Dialogue is important and it can be powerful. But it can also prove counterproductive and upsetting if participants are not in agreement about ground rules. Having agreed rules for dialogue is not about censoring what people want to say; it is about ensuring a common sense of purpose and respectful engagement.

One of IFN's earliest publications was its code: *Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs*. This was developed in 1993 by a multi faith working group in consultation with IFN's member bodies and is endorsed by all organisations that join IFN. It is reproduced on pages 26–27. It provides important principles for dialogue.

Other guidelines

Many of IFN's member bodies have, in addition, their own guidelines which are framed in the light of their own experience.

"Dialogue is very important for people to understand each other better. Genuine dialogue is not a collection of monologues: banks of the river that never meet. It requires starting with a receptive mind and being willing to engage in a genuine two-way process."

VISHWA HINDU PARISHAD UK

Participants in dialogue at IFN's National Meeting *(Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)*

"We need 'safe', respectful, forums with good etiquette infusing dialogue where we can listen with love and respect to those who present varying faith perspectives."

YORK INTERFAITH GROUP

"At 3FF co-creating a shared safe space with participants which frames a dialogue in which complex issues can be navigated in a sensitive and meaningful way is critical to ensuring success. This agreement, to which all participants are held by the facilitator, includes elements such as a presumption of goodwill and a commitment to engaging in dialogue to understand rather than debate to persuade, and creates the mutual trust and respect which is required to explore complex ideas."

3FF

'Dialogue on the spot' at IFN meeting *(Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)*

"The success of dialogue is dependent on both parties being prepared to listen to one another, being curious about how 'the other' understands their beliefs and how those beliefs play out in life. Planning how to respond to the point 'the other' is making, rather than truly listening is an obstacle to successful dialogue."

THE PAGAN FEDERATION

"Embrace humility – by preparing to leave our comfort zones, to become vulnerable, and to launch out into deep water. Enable dialogue – by recognising and expressing our need for each other across religious, cultural and social boundaries. Enjoy hospitality – by accepting the precious gifts that are offered by others along the way as a blessing and not a threat."

EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS AGENCY

"How amazing it is in our meetings together to do some deep listening amongst inter faith friends in an atmosphere characterised by respect and gentleness."

DEVON FAITH AND BELIEF FORUM

Participants in dialogue at an IFN day for local inter faith practitioners *(Photo: IFN)*

Interfaith Scotland volunteers with Belief in Dialogue booklet *(Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)*

The following principles for inter faith engagement, 'Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs' were developed by the Inter Faith Network for the UK, with its member bodies, in 1993 and continue to be widely used both in the UK and beyond.

A printable copy of the 'code' can be downloaded from the IFN website at www.interfaith.org.uk/code.

Members of IFN Faith Communities Forum in dialogue *(Photo: IFN)*

Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs

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

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

- Respecting other people's freedom within the law to express their beliefs and convictions
- Learning to understand what others actually believe and value, and letting them express this in their own terms
- Respecting the convictions of others about food, dress and social etiquette and not behaving in ways which cause needless offence

Dialogue Practicalities

- Recognising that all of us at times fall short of the *ideals* of our own traditions and never comparing our own ideals with other people's *practices*
- Working to prevent disagreement from leading to conflict
- Always seeking to avoid violence in our relationships

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

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

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

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

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

Pointers for productive dialogue

Below are some pointers for productive dialogue. They draw on IFN's work over the last thirty years and experiences and reflections shared by its member bodies. For convenience, they are presented in a checklist format.

At the planning stage

Earliest stage

- ☐ Who will be part of the planning group? Are we reflective of the different groups that we plan to bring together?
- ☐ Who is responsible for inviting people and following up?

Topics, participants and format

- ☐ What are the desired outcomes of the dialogue?
- ☐ What is the topic of focus or what are the areas for discussion?
- ☐ Who shall we involve?
  - people from particular faith communities?
  - laypeople?
  - faith leaders?
  - those of non-religious beliefs?
  - people of a particular gender or age range?
  - specialists on the issue(s) under discussion?
  - government/civic figures?
  - just members of our own inter faith body?
  - other?
- ☐ Will the dialogue be by invitation or open to anyone who is interested?
- ☐ Will people be invited in a formal representative capacity or on an individual or other basis?
- ☐ Is there a clear brief for presenters and guidance for those participating?
- ☐ Will there be a facilitator – and, if so, who might be suitable for this particular dialogue or series of dialogues?
- ☐ Do certain areas need particular care in discussion? If so, how would these be addressed if they were to arise during the dialogue?
- ☐ Is there a need to consult or involve a person or persons who have particular expertise that can be drawn upon in the course of the dialogue?
- ☐ Are there any issues around 'due diligence' in terms of contributors who may have views that could bring the process or the organisation holding it into disrepute or even break the law?
- ☐ What advance preparation may be needed?
- ☐ How much time is likely to be needed in order to enter into fruitful dialogue? What is it likely to be

possible to cover in the time available, and what might have to wait for another time?

- ☐ If the planned participants do not know each other, is enough time being built in for proper introductions?
- ☐ Is our meeting of a kind where it may be helpful to begin with an ice-breaker activity? (Examples of icebreakers are easy to find on the internet.)

Timing

- ☐ Is the dialogue being planned for a date that does not clash with one of the key festivals (and their preparation time) or fasts of a group that it is planned to involve?
- ☐ Is the timing of the dialogue such that it does not clash with the daily or weekly religious observances of planned participants ?
- ☐ Are we giving participants sufficient notice?

When considering the date and time for a dialogue or series of dialogues, a multi faith calendar is a vital tool. A widely used calendar produced by an IFN member body is the *Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals*, (www.shapworkingparty.org.uk) information from which is shared, with permission, on the IFN website at www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals.

Place

- ☐ Is the venue likely to be acceptable to all involved?
- ☐ It is important to find venues where participants feel at ease. For some dialogues this might point to using venues such as community centres or town halls. If using faith venues, it is important to discover just where the 'sacred' or explicitly religious area of a faith community's building may be and which parts are considered, by contrast, as appropriate for ordinary meetings. The latter areas are usually found best for dialogue. If possible, consult with those involved about the space to be used.
- ☐ If the event is being held in a faith community space linked to a place of worship, has information about etiquette/requirements been included with the invitation?
- ☐ How will any requests for men and women to be seated separately be handled?
- ☐ Is there space for smaller groups to talk among themselves, or for participants to sit in a circle if they wish?
- ☐ Is there a place within the venue that someone can go to if they feel need for a timeout?
- ☐ Is there an appropriate space where those who wish can retire separately for prayer or meditation?

Dialogue Practicalities

Catering

- ☐ Are planned refreshments suitable for the participants, who may have a variety of dietary requirements? (It is always a good idea to ask about these when people are invited.)
- ☐ If a meal is part of the dialogue event, what arrangements are in place for labelling of each dish to avoid accidental eating of foods not acceptable to some for religious reasons?

For a comprehensive guide to 'Catering and faith based dietary practice', including guidelines for the dietary requirements of specific faith communities, go to https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/publications/food.

Some other considerations

- ☐ Is there an expectation of confidentiality?
- ☐ Will tweeting or other social media posts be allowed/encouraged?
- ☐ May participants make public their own reports on the dialogue or will there be an agreement that all will await the formal note/minute/report of the meeting?
- ☐ Will a statement or report be produced at the end – if so, how will it be agreed and cleared?
- ☐ Will the dialogue be according to the Chatham House Rule, where 'participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed'? Or will contributions be attributed in the note – or some other noting approach used?
- ☐ If the dialogue breaks down, are there contingency plans to draw the conversation to a close and then seek to recover the good relations that might be affected?

At the outset of the dialogue

It is often helpful for an opening statement to be made along the lines of a reminder that dialogue is for mutual learning and to enable people to develop their understanding of the viewpoints of others; that it will build on commonalities, but honour difference and thought-through disagreement; and that all dialogue will be respectful and open.

- ☐ Seek to ensure that participants agree on:
  - the principles upon which the dialogue is based
  - ground rules
  - whether people will speak formally in turn (at least initially) or whether there will be a more free style of conversation from the start
  - the confidentiality or otherwise of discussion; if it will be recorded and whether a record of the discussion will be published or not and, if so, if the record needs to be agreed by all the

participants (or those to whom the task of clearance is delegated)

Once the dialogue is under way

- ☐ Bear in mind the points in *Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs* (see pages 26–27)
- ☐ Seek to ensure that issues are considered equitably
- ☐ Start and continue from a position of principled and respectful openness to the views of others and allow all to express their views
- ☐ Avoid assumptions about what is important to others in the dialogue – what might seem a small matter to one person can be very important to another

At the end of the dialogue

- ☐ If possible, draw out key areas of agreement and points where difference remains and seek to ensure that all participants are satisfied with the summary
- ☐ Ensure that all participants know what is going to happen next
- ☐ If there is unexpectedly a call for a statement about the dialogue to be made, ask all present about their view on that and ensure that there is an agreed approach to any such statement being developed and cleared
- ☐ Reaffirm the positive purpose of the dialogue
- ☐ Seek to ensure that participants leave on good terms

After the dialogue

- ☐ Keep people in touch with outcomes, where that has been agreed
- ☐ Seek to evaluate how participants experienced the dialogue, whether it has achieved its outcomes (or contributed to these) and what its impact looks to be

"People matter. Genuine dialogue requires careful listening. It takes time for everybody involved to be heard. Agree what has been said openly together at each stage."

QUAKER COMMITTEE FOR CHRISTIAN AND INTERFAITH RELATIONS

"Good relations require honest, well-regulated discussions. Dialogue requires two elements: a facilitator with a good track record; agreed parameters – readiness to listen, respect for all, the right to differ and commitment to confidentiality. Also issues and their consequences need to be introduced briefly, accurately and objectively and then contribution sought from people around the table. Without good rules, a dialogue can degenerate into mudslinging or defensive talk."

COVENTRY MULTI- FAITH FORUM

Some additional practical pointers for online dialogue

The internet provides rich opportunities for dialogue – and also risks.

Online, it is possible to communicate with people we have never met and to become part of conversations which can open up many possibilities for fruitful learning and constructive engagement. At the same time, it can sometimes be harder, for example, to assess a person's motivations and character. The same principles and skills for dialogue which apply in face to face dialogue apply but there are also some others:

- **Motivations:** Be aware that motivations are not always so easy to explore online.
- **Communicating:** Avoid communicating with someone online in a way that you would not face to face.
- **Anonymity:** Anonymity can be helpful where a topic is especially emotive and participants have agreed ground rules about the need to be honest and open but also respectful. An example of this might be use of an online forum to tease out an issue which people who know each other have found hard to discuss in person. However, there is a need to be careful about dialogue where one or more people involved are contributing anonymously – anonymity does not always encourage a sense of responsibility for one's statements, particularly where the participants have no pre-existing relationship or stake in the outcome of the process.

Forums on the internet can also be places where individuals may use anonymity or false identities to manipulate or groom. Caution is important.

Just as in physical meetings, when discussing difficult or controversial topics online, tempers can fray. Whereas a skilled meeting chairperson may help disagreeing parties to remain constructive, many online discussion spaces operate without 'moderators', and it is therefore down to the individuals concerned to encourage a temperate and respectful engagement.

Skills and resources for dialogue

To benefit from, and contribute well to, a dialogue certain skills are helpful. Many of these are developed through our general education – for example through the kind of learning in the classroom that embeds skills of listening, question asking and finding ways forward towards solutions or respectful recognition of disagreement.

These skills are very much linked to the points to be found in the guidelines on *Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs* (pages 26–27):

- working within agreed ground rules
- engaging courteously
- listening carefully and well
- avoiding unnecessary interruption of others
- asking questions which allow the respondent to answer in their own terms
- allowing others to question us
- keeping an open mind
- presenting your views clearly and explaining helpfully
- drawing others in, as appropriate

Confidence in dialogue can be linked to the ability to communicate one's own perspective well. Local members of faith groups can often draw on material produced by their national bodies which support them in thinking about bases within their tradition for entering dialogue and engaging with people of other faiths. Three different examples are below:

"As Catholics, we are encouraged to remember that the same Spirit that works in our hearts works in other religions, too. The theology behind this is laid out in the 2010 teaching document of our bishops, called 'Meeting God in Friend and Stranger. Fostering respect and mutual understanding between the religions'. Locally, this work is carried out by a network of diocesan coordinators for interreligious dialogue and other enthusiasts, who come together for regular meetings. Nationally, we provide a newsletter on interreligious matters, audio resources on different religions, suggestions of prayer for each other, and other helpful resources."

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

"Resources to support informed and productive dialogue are very important. The Baptist Union of GB published a resource called: 12 Myths of Inter Faith Engagement. It is made up of postcards, each about a different issue, which can be used with small groups, such as youth groups, to help our members think about what is involved in inter faith dialogue and their role within in it is as Baptist Christians."

BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN

There are also other skills in dialogue – for example, developing the ability to listen actively, to question and answer well, and to avoid approaches that may foreclose on development of an issue under discussion. A number of IFN's member bodies offer training for inter faith dialogue (see the table under Resources). There are also an increasing number of organisations that offer more general skills for dialogue.

Launch of 'In Good Faith' initiative at Lambeth Palace, a joint initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations. Modelled on their own well rooted friendship, this partnership programme is designed to ensure priests and rabbis based in close geographical proximity will be encouraged to explore mutual concerns and opportunities for shared action together, initially for the coming year. *(Photo: Lambeth Palace)*

Dialogue and difficult issues

Dialogue often focuses on topics and issues where the degree of difference or disagreement is comfortable, or at the least does not disturb. Sometimes, however, participants find themselves approaching issues and exchanging views on matters where there may be either a profound disagreement or an encounter with painful past history or present events.

"Many people are very uncomfortable talking about religion and so avoid important issues for fear of causing offence. These are the very issues that we do need to talk about, but we have to learn the skills of listening and sharing on issues of faith and belief, not least the very contentious ones."

NORTHERN IRELAND INTER FAITH FORUM

"It is rapidly becoming a core leadership competence to work creatively with differences and disagreements. Knowing the skills of facilitating difficult conversations and working productively with diversity is essential to our times."

ST ETHELBURGA'S CENTRE FOR RECONCILIATION AND PEACE

It is very important to ensure that dialogue takes place to tackle difficult issues. These should not be shunned or dialogue may seem to be of little value. However, relationships of mutual trust need to be established if the dialogue is to have a chance of succeeding.

IFN's Code, *Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs*, reproduced on pages 26–27 and the pointers for productive dialogue on pages 28–31 should be helpful.

Difficult issues are usually complex and sensitive and the following points may be helpful:

- Extra time and resources may be needed to enable participants to engage with historical analysis, issues of language, and issues relating to inclusion and exclusion among other things
- Ground rules, as usual, need clear agreement
- Challenging issues are sometimes best addressed, at least in the first instance, at invitation-only events conducted under the Chatham House Rule
- Skilled facilitation is very important
- Tackling difficult issues in a public event calls for both skilled facilitation and a careful risk analysis ahead of the event of what its impact may be

"Well facilitated dialogue, in a safe environment, gives people the confidence to really open up and say what is challenging, difficult and painful. The face to face and heart to heart engagement can be difficult and challenging sometimes but is essential if barriers between communities are to be broken down."

INTERFAITH SCOTLAND

"Inter faith dialogue needs to move beyond representatives of different communities being superficially nice to each other but not doing more to enhance understanding and social cohesion. The difficulty in moving to constructive engagement lies in the balance between reaching out to other communities with different beliefs while preserving our own distinct religious integrity."

NETWORK OF SIKH ORGANISATIONS (UK)

Privacy and safe spaces

There is much focus in the present time on transparency and an assumption is often made that all discussions should take place in the full gaze of any interested party. However, sometimes dialogues need a degree of privacy to develop – especially where there is a diplomatic dimension to them or where painful aspects of shared histories are being discussed. It is important to agree the basis on which dialogues are held and reported.

Creating a feeling of a safe and trusted space is important for all dialogues but perhaps particularly for those where challenging issues may arise.

"Friendship Groups, consisting of around 10 people from different faiths, which meet in people's homes several times a year, have proved really valuable safe places. Sometimes used to discuss topics of a specifically religious nature, but also going into more general areas, they have strengthened mutual understanding and trust. They also mean that there are improved channels of communications, which can be used if difficult or awkward issues arise in the community."

ALTRINCHAM INTERFAITH GROUP

Limits to dialogue?

One criticism of inter faith dialogue made by some is that it only involves those who agree or those who will not be outspoken on difficult issues. Concerns about hate speech and about terrorism are among the factors that have inevitably led those holding dialogues to need to think carefully about the possible impact of inviting speakers who might heighten community tensions, damage the organisation's reputation or even break the law.

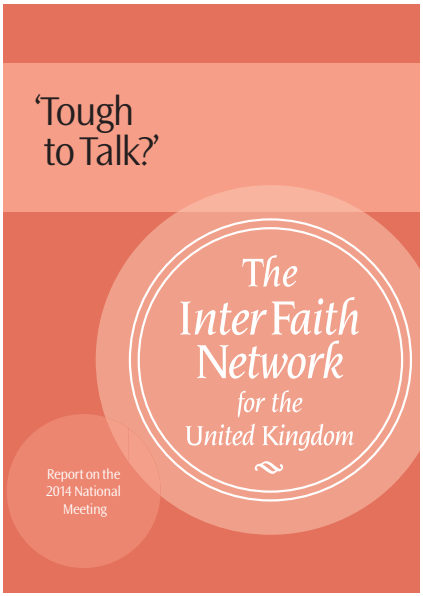
Both liberal and very conservative members of particular religion and belief traditions – or, indeed secular figures – may find each other's views very challenging. However, even where there is strong disagreement, dialogue can help make room for difference and it is vital that some dialogues do so.

There is, however, a significant difference between views at one or other end of such a spectrum and those which break the law through, for example, inciting hatred or glorifying terrorism.

Similarly, if secular figures, such as politicians or activists, are invited into the dialogue, there is a difference between the expression of very conservative or very liberal views on particular issues and demonstrating deep and demonstrable intolerance which could be seen as stirring up hatred.

It is important, therefore, when thinking about inviting a person to be part of a dialogue to think through the potential impact. If your organisation is a charity, guidance on some aspects of this can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-charities-from-abuse-for-extremist-purposes.

There are particular issues for schools and Further Education colleges that are covered by a school's or college's safeguarding duty. Education is a devolved responsibility and each of the four nations of the UK has its own safeguarding legislation and guidance which should be consulted in relation to speakers in schools and FE colleges.



5. Widening the circle

One of the main purposes of talking to those of faiths and beliefs other than our own is to create understanding where previously there was none, or to strengthen existing understanding. This process is likely to involve talking to those with whom we would not previously have engaged.

'Widening the circle' could, for example, involve:

- Holding a bilateral dialogue between two faith communities that have not historically engaged with one another
- Enabling dialogue on topics usually avoided due to political sensitivities
- Enabling conversation between religious and non-religious belief groups
- Encouraging intergenerational inter faith engagement
- Further dialogue and cooperation between faith groups and public agencies, including local authorities, or health and emergency services
- On a personal basis opening up conversation with people in the course of everyday life.

There is little point in opening out conversations if there is no sense of what that would achieve. Dialogues that are set up to involve new people but without a genuine sense of why that is important can sometimes frustrate rather than engage.

Setting up new dialogues

Sometimes circumstances dictate, or at least suggest, who we might want to talk with about an issue or we may be invited to join an existing dialogue. However, this is not always the case and when deciding to talk in a structured way with others on an inter faith basis, there are a number of questions that present themselves such as:

- Is the dialogue that we want to develop one that is for particular constituencies: for example specific to a particular nation or area, for women or for young people?
- Do my/our reasons for dialogue point to engaging with people of one, two or more traditions?
- Are there any other particular parameters affecting who we choose to dialogue with?
- Who will make arrangements for, and service, the dialogue process?
- Is the dialogue for a fixed duration or a longer term initiative?
- What do we hope the outcomes will be?

A number of reports over the years have highlighted that there are many people who rarely or never engage in conversation about the kinds of issues that inter faith dialogue tackles and may be isolated in many ways. You may wish to consider what this might mean for your organisation or local community. How might you reach out to engage? Are

A dialogue between Slough Faith Partnership and Windsor Humanists on the theme of 'The Impact of Extreme Religion on Humanity' *(Photo: Slough Faith Partnership)*

there any particular issues about facilitation or style of engagement that need to be considered?

Another important question is whether dialogue, as such, is the best route for engagement. May social action projects or sports projects, for example, be more suited to at least the initial engagement? They can be a more accessible route into engaging and without pressure to come into immediate conversation on what can be challenging issues.

Reticence can be rooted in genuine concerns. Being clear about the reasons for dialogue and its parameters and outcomes can help address these.

"Reaching out to talk with people or groups with which you have not in the past normally engaged should form a major part of dialogue. Talking to the already converted is very satisfying but not effective. One of the aims of founding JIF was to approach and engage with those who disagree with us."

JOSEPH INTERFAITH FOUNDATION

"The World Congress of Faiths has, across the last eight decades, brought people of many different faiths together for dialogue and exploration, welcoming fresh perspectives and spiritualities as part of its approach to widening the circle of mutual learning and growth."

WORLD CONGRESS OF FAITHS

Participants at an Inter Faith Week discussion held by the All Party Parliamentary Inter Faith Group with IFN *(Photo: IFN)*

World Congress of Faiths discussion at the Buddhist Society *(Photo: The Buddhist Society)*

Making the case for dialogue

"Inter faith dialogue is all 'tea and samosas'; I like things that have an action and a concrete outcome."

"Dialogue and shared social action are both important. Dialogue can be an important basis for effective shared social action."

"The integrity of my faith may not be respected – the other person/people may try to push me to agree with their views and not listen properly to mine."

"In a well structured dialogue with clear ground rules, this should not be the case."

"There is not room for genuine honesty"

"Good dialogue is based on honesty on the part of participants and not preventing that."

"My views may be misunderstood or misrepresented."

"In a respectful and careful dialogue that should not be the case."

"There's an agenda at work in the dialogue that I don't agree with."

"Then ask for that to be bottomed out at the start of discussion, bringing the issues involved into the open. Good dialogue has room for clear disagreement."

"It's a liberal multicultural agenda that makes everyone agree on lowest common denominators."

"There is no requirement to agree as a result of dialogue – nor a set position that rules out strong dissenting views, but rather the hope of greater mutual understanding and respect."

"History has taught me and other members of my community that there is no likely positive outcome; there is no point in going back to the table of dialogue."

"It is always worth 'coming back to the table'; new ways forward may emerge from the dialogue."

A Baha'i Community of the UK dialogue, 'Conversations and Beyond' during Inter Faith Week *(Baha'i Community of the UK)*

Dialogue – making opportunities

For most people the fact that they have not been involved in an inter faith dialogue is more to do with the lack of opportunity.

Publicise your dialogues and work to draw in more people where this is appropriate.

Also consider drawing people into inter faith dialogue through a route such as Inter Faith Week. Inter Faith Week takes place every year in November, usually the third week. It features events organised by local, regional and national inter faith groups, schools, universities, students' unions, local authorities, businesses, emergency services, sports organisations, places of worship and national faith communities among many others. It offers many opportunities to take part. On the Inter Faith Week website, which can be found at www.interfaithweek.org, you can find information, resources and much more. Details for Scottish Interfaith Week can be found on the Interfaith Scotland website http://www.interfaithscotland.org/.

Why not think about holding a dialogue for the next Inter Faith Week? *The Inter Faith Week Toolkit – Developing successful activities* is a helpful resource. It can be found at: www.interfaithweek.org/toolkit.

6. Get involved

Taking part in existing dialogues

If you are a member of a faith community, you could contact your local place of worship or national faith community representative body to find out about opportunities. Many local faith organisations and places of worship actively engage in dialogue with other faith groups (www.interfaith.org.uk/locator). The best way to find out about what is happening at a local level is to speak to someone in your community. Alternatively, to see a full list of IFN's National Faith Community Representative Bodies, go to www.interfaith.org.uk/nfcrbs.

Many of IFN's National and Regional Inter Faith Organisation and Educational and Academic member bodies also provide opportunities for dialogue. See www.interfaith.org.uk/members/list for contact details and a full list and the chart at https://www.interfaith.org.uk/involved/find-a-national-initiative.

For opportunities in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, visit www.interfaithscotland.org, or email ni.interfaith@gmail.com and post@cytun.cymru, respectively.

For suggestions on initiating new dialogue see page 37.

In conversation at the Zoroastrian Centre at 'Indian Soldiers in WW1' event held by the Golden Tours Foundation with Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund *(Photo: V Kumar Photography)*

"Recently, we brought people together at the Zoroastrian Centre during Inter Faith Week to remember the immense contribution made by the countless volunteers from the Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic communities from the British Empire and later Commonwealth countries who served the King Emperor and Great Britain in World War I. This drew in people who might not usually have found themselves in conversation with the Zoroastrian and other communities and created new connections."

ZOROASTRIAN TRUST FUNDS OF EUROPE

7. Resources

Below are some resources relevant to practical engagement between people of different faiths and beliefs, published by the Inter Faith Network for the UK or to which it has contributed as a partner. There are many other resources produced by its member bodies and by others.

Building Good Relations with People of Differnt Faiths and Beliefs

IFN works to build good relations between people of different faiths and beliefs, promoting mutual respect and understanding. In 1993, it developed, in consultation with its member bodies, guidance on building good relations with people of different faiths and beliefs. All member bodies subscribe to this guidance, and it has also come to be used by a number of inter faith organisations around the world. The guidance, sometimes referred to as IFN's 'code', was first issued as part of a consultative document *Mission, Dialogue and Inter Religious Encounter* published by IFN in 1993.
www.interfaith.org.uk/code

Inter Faith Learning, Dialogue and Cooperation: Next Steps

A booklet containing information and pointers about different ways to get further involved with inter faith activity, including information about member bodies of the Inter Faith Network for the UK and their different areas of work, including dialogue.2016
www.interfaith.org.uk/nextsteps

The Local Inter Faith Guide

A guide to setting up and running a local inter faith initiative. Published by the Inter Faith Network for the UK in association with the Inner Cities Religious Council of the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Much of this guidance is also applicable to establishing a formal dialogue with people of other faiths and beliefs. 2005
www.interfaith.org.uk/lifguide

Faiths Working Together Toolkit (In partnership with its publishers, Near Neighbours)

The toolkit includes practical pointers for making contact and for planning and publicising joint social action initiatives, as well as advice on key principles to consider, such as the importance of looking for shared values and experiences while working well with difference. 2015
www.interfaith.org.uk/fwttoolkit

Connect: Different Faiths Shared Values

An inter faith action and resource guide for young people aged 16-25. *Connect* encourages young people to get involved with inter faith activity and to build bridges within communities. More than ever young people are becoming aware of the importance of working to create better understanding between people of different cultures and religions. *Connect* aims to provide ideas and inspiration for young people to get involved and begin their own initiatives. 2004
www.interfaith.org.uk/connect

Tough to Talk

A report on IFN's 2014 National Meeting. The resource includes transcripts of a number of addresses that addressed the theme of dialogue and difficult issues. 2014
www.interfaith.org.uk/toughtotalk

'Face to Face' and 'Heart to Heart': People of faith in dialogue

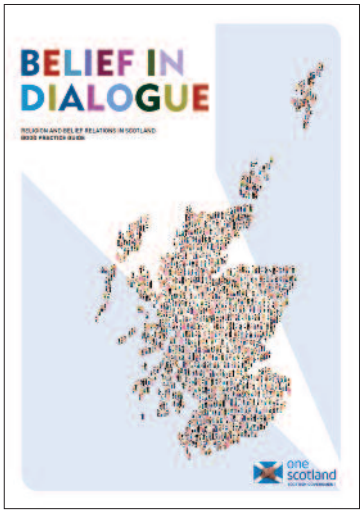
Report on the 2008 National Meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. 2008
www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/face-to-face-and-heart-to-heart-people-of-faith-in-dialogue

Bilateral Inter Faith Dialogue in the UK

The proceedings of an IFN day conference looking at the special value of dialogue between people of two different faith traditions: bilateral dialogue. 2009
www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/bilateral-inter-faith-dialogue-in-the-uk

In addition, Interfaith Scotland have produced the following resource:

Interfaith Scotland – Belief in Dialogue: A Good Practice Guide



Interfaith Scotland worked with the Scottish Government to produce a resource, title above, published by the Scottish Government, which is also very helpful in a UK inter faith context.

'Belief in Dialogue: A Good Practice Guide' provides guidance on building good relations among and between religious and belief communities and individuals. In encourages people to listen to those whose beliefs are different from their own, to try to understand and appreciate them. 2011

http://www.interfaithscotland.org/resources/publications/belief-in-dialogue/

National Faith Community Representative Member Bodies

A regularly updated list of National Faith Community Representative Bodies in membership of IFN can be found at: www.interfaith.org.uk/nfcrbs

Baha'i Community of the UK
www.bahai.org.uk

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
londonmandir.baps.org

Board of Deputies of British Jews
www.bod.org.uk

British Muslim Forum
www.britishmuslimforum.co.uk

Buddhist Society
www.thebuddhistsociety.org

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
www.cbcew.org.uk

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Great Britain)
www.mormonnewsroom.org.uk

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
www.ctbi.org.uk

Churches Together in England
www.cte.org.uk

Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK)
www.cte.org.uk/Groups/234690/Home/About/Membership_of_CTE/Member_Churches_of/Member_Churches_of.aspx

Druid Network
www.druidnetwork.org

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
www.unitarian.org.uk

Hindu Council (UK)
www.hinducouncil.net

Hindu Forum of Britain
www.hfb.org.uk

Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain
www.baptist.org.uk

Islamic Cultural Centre
www.iccuk.org

Jain Network
www.jainnetwork.com

Jain Samaj Europe
www.jaincentreleicester.com

Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain (Association of Muslim Scholars)
www.jamiat.co.uk

Methodist Church in Britain
www.methodist.org.uk

Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
www.minab.org.uk

Muslim Council of Britain
www.mcb.org.uk

National Council of Hindu Temples (UK)
www.nchtuk.org

Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
www.nbo.org.uk

Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
www.nsouk.co.uk

Pagan Federation
www.paganfed.org

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures/quaker-committee-for-christian-and-interfaith-relations

Spiritualists' National Union
www.snu.org.uk

Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB
www.londonbuddhistvihara.org

United Reformed Church in the UK
www.urc.org.uk

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)
www.vhp.org.uk/vhpuk

World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League
www.wabil.com

World Islamic Mission (UK)
www.wimuk.com

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe
www.ztfe.com

Local Inter Faith Organisations

There are many multi faith local inter faith groups across the United Kingdom.

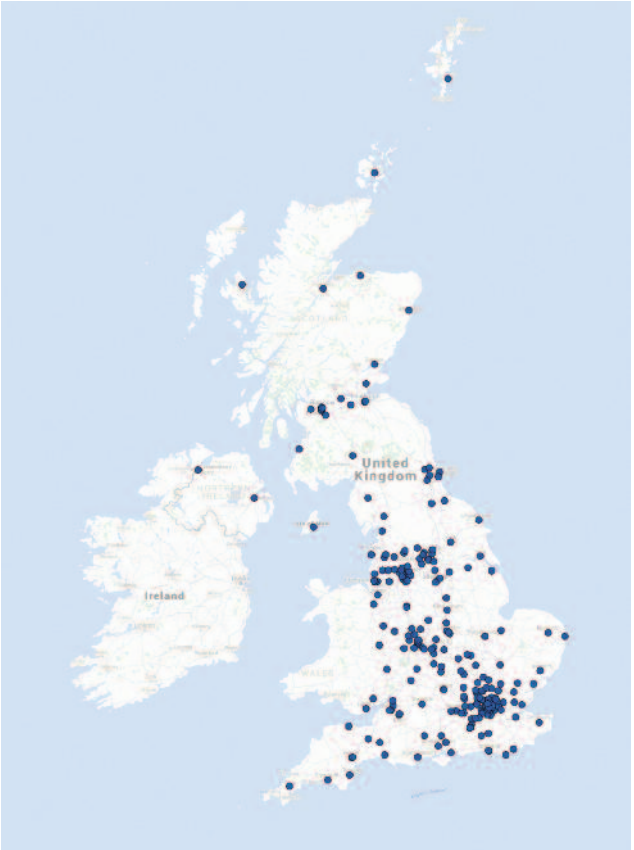
Multi faith local inter faith groups are all independent bodies, including those that are members of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. All bodies known to the Inter Faith Network can be found listed at: www.interfaith.org.uk/locator.

Interfaith Scotland is the best source for any additional information required on local groups in Scotland, www.interfaithscotland.org. The Inter Faith Council for Wales, www.cytun.org.uk/interfaithwales/interfaith_eng_home.html and the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum, www.niinterfaithforum.org, are likewise able to provide further information about local initiatives in Wales and Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum, respectively.

Branches of UK or national bodies

There are also some bodies which are branches or groups of national bodies. These include branches of the Council of Christians and Jews and groups of the Women's Interfaith Network. The chart at the back of the book indicates which of the listed bodies say that they have branches.

For local branches of the Council of Christians and Jews, there is a map on their website and the office can put you in touch.



www.interfaith.org.uk/locator

National and Regional Inter Faith Member Organisations

IFN's National and Regional Inter Faith member organisations provide a wide variety of ways to get involved in inter faith activity. Some engage in bilateral dialogue, between two particular faiths, whilst others engage in multi faith dialogue, between more than two faiths. Contact details and a short profile of each can be found below. A list of IFN's National and Regional member bodies can also be found at www.interfaith.org.uk/nrifos and contact details there are regularly updated.

Interfaith Scotland

Linking inter faith activity and developing good relations between people of different faiths in Scotland.
www.interfaithscotland.org
admin@interfaithscotland.org
0141 558 0778
Flemington House (2nd Floor),
110 Flemington Street, Glasgow G21 4BF

Inter-Faith Council for Wales

Building trust and respect between people of all faiths throughout Wales
www.cytun.org.uk/interfaithwales/interfaith_eng_home.html
post@cytun.cymru
02920 464375
c/o Cytun, 58 Richmond Road, Cardiff CF24 3AT

Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum

Promoting friendship and mutual understanding across the spectrum of religious and ethnic life in Northern Ireland.
www.niinterfaithforum.org
ni.interfaith@gmail.com
028 9038 4328
c/o Clonard Monastery, 1 Clonard Gardens, Belfast BT13 2RL

3FF

Building friendship, goodwill and understanding between Muslims, Christians and Jews through dialogue and action.
www.3ff.org.uk
info@3ff.org.uk
020 7482 9549
Star House, 104 Grafton Road, London NW5 4BA

All Faiths Network for the United Kingdom

Our aim is the furtherance of mutual respect. We welcome membership from people of every faith and belief.
www.allfaithsnetwork.org.uk
martin@allfaithsnetwork.org.uk
020 3411 7596
Office 7, 35–37 Ludgate Hill, London EC4M 7JN

Children of Abraham (Imams and Rabbis Council of the United Kingdom)

Working to build dialogue and co-operation between Jewish and Muslim communities.
www.childrenofabraham.org.uk
enquiries@childrenofabraham.org.uk
020 7193 7943
145-157 St John Street, London EC1V 4PW

Christian Muslim Forum

Creating a safe space where Christians and Muslims can meet, learn and understand about each other.
www.christianmuslimforum.org
info@christianmuslimforum.org
020 7832 5841
200a Pentonville Road, King's Cross, London, N1 9JP

Christians Aware Faith Awareness

Building understanding, mutual trust and respect between people of different faiths.
www.christiansaware.co.uk
barbarabutler@christiansaware.co.uk
0116 2540770
2 Saxby Street, Leicester LE2 0ND

Coexist Foundation

Promoting better understanding between Jews, Christians and Muslims, and between people of these faiths and others, through education, dialogue and research.
www.coexist.org
info@coexistfoundation.org
07584 993 996

Council of Christians and Jews

The leading nationwide forum for Christian – Jewish engagement
www.ccj.org.uk
director@ccj.org.uk
0203 515 3003
The Council of Christians and Jews, 1st Floor, Network Headquarters, 333 Edgware Road, London, NW9 6TD

Council of Dharmic Faiths

Uniting the spirit of the five dharmic faiths, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.
www.councilofdharmicfaithsuk.com
info@dharmicfaiths.org
020 8200 0828
Jain Centre, 64-68 Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5DR

East of England Faiths Agency CIC

Supporting and strengthening local inter faith, faith and public sector work in the region.
www.eefa.net
office@eefa.net
01379678615
The Inter Faith Centre, Brightspace, 160 Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 0HH

Faiths Forum for London

The Faiths Forum for London empowers religious communities to work together for a better London.
www.faithsforum4london.org
info@faithsforum4london.org
020 3515 3786
62 Grosvenor Street, London, W1K 3JF

Hindu Christian Forum

Hindus and Christians working together with mutual respect to strengthen relationships, understanding and learning of each other's faiths.
www.hinduchristianforum.co.uk
npalan@aol.com
156 Cromwell Road, London SW7 4EF

Interfaith Alliance UK

Family of people united in friendship, from diverse progressive and liberal faith communities, working together to promote the love of the One Same God.
www.interfaithalliance.org.uk/
enquiries@interfaithalliance.org.uk
020 7193 7943
145-157 St John Street, London EC1V 4PW

International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)

Campaigning for freedom of religion and belief as a basis for human rights and integrity.
www.iarf.net
luke@iarf.net
Essex Hall, 1–6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY

International Interfaith Centre

Promoting international inter religious understanding and cooperation between people for a just and harmonious world.
www.iicao.org
27 Ouseley Close, Marston, Oxford OX3 0JS.

Joseph Interfaith Foundation

Fostering constructive and realistic dialogue between the Muslim and Jewish communities in the UK.
www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org
info@josephinterfaithfoundation.org
020 8458 9081
75 North End Road, London NW11 7RL

Lokahi Foundation

Enabling sustainable, diverse communities – a dynamic, resilient society where religious difference is a source of strength and creativity.
www.lokahi.org.uk
enquiries@lokahi.org.uk
020 7795 4190
23 Kensington Square, London, W8 5HN

London Boroughs Faiths Network

Connecting local practitioners and public agencies across the capital.
www.lbfn.org
convener@lbfn.org
Telephone: 020 8674 4610
Collaboration House, 333 Edgware Road, London NW9 6TD

London Inter Faith Centre

London Inter Faith Centre is a Christian centre which seeks to engage with the reality of individuals and communities "Living Together in a Multi Faith Society".
www.londoninterfaith.org.uk
info@londoninterfaith.org.uk
07801286819
125 Salusbury Road , London NW6 6RG

London Society of Jews and Christians

Increasing religious understanding and good will between Jews and Christians and combating religious intolerance.
www.ljs.org/a-place-of-meeting/clubs-and-societies/83/london-society-of-jews-christians/
marklsolomon@btinternet.com
020 7580 1663
28 St. John's Wood Road, London NW8 7HA

Maimonides Interfaith Foundation

Promoting understanding and respect between people from the three Abrahamic faiths through the power of art, creativity, intercultural dialogue and education.
www.maimonides-foundation.org
enquiries@maimonides-foundation.org
020 7287 3830
Nour House, 2 Old Burlington Street, London W1S 3AD

Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby

Promoting mutual understanding between people of different faiths/beliefs and none and building respect between people as fellow human beings across cultures.
www.multifaithcentre.org
mfc@derby.ac.uk
01332 591285
The University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, Derbyshire DE22 1GB

North East Regional Faiths Network

The North East Regional Faiths Network is a network of groups, networks and organisations concerned with promoting good inter-faith relations and understanding in the region.
www.nerfn.org
info@nerfn.org
07710404716
URC Northern Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 8JJ

Religions for Peace UK

The world's religious communities cooperate effectively for peace.
www.religionsforpeace.org.uk
secretary@religionsforpeace.org.uk
Telephone: 07762105387
18 Little Acres, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9JW

Scriptural Reasoning

By reading together, we seek to understand better and respect each other's important differences of belief, and to work together in building our shared civic life in Britain.
www.scripturalreasoning.org.uk
enquiries@scripturalreasoning.org.uk
020 7193 7943
145–157 St John Street, London EC1V 4PW

South East England Faiths Forum

SEEFF Supports and brings together the interests of faith communities, non-faith organisations and regional bodies, to promote mutual faith understanding and engagement for the benefit of the whole community.
seeffchair@gmail.com
contact@se-faithforum.net
01865 512126
Guildford URC, 83 Portsmouth Road, Guildford GU2 4BS

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace

We help people build relationships across divisions of conflict, culture and religion.
www.stethelburgas.org
enquiries@stethelburgas.org
020 7496 1610
78 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AG.

St Philip's Centre

The St Philip's Centre's main aim is to enable people to learn to live well together. We have a Christian foundation, and work with people of all faiths and no faith.
www.stphilipscentre.co.uk
admin@stphilipscentre.co.uk
0116 273 3459
2A Stoughton Drive North, Leicester, LE5 5UB

Educational and Academic Member Bodies

If your interest in inter faith activity is educational or academic, then a number of IFN's member bodies will be able to help you get involved. Many publish resources, and organise lectures, conferences and seminars. Below are short profiles and contact details for these. Details can also be found at

United Religions Initiative (UK)

Our purpose is to build bridges linking different faiths, in order to protect the most fragile and disadvantaged areas of our society from religious intolerance and bigotry.
www.uri.org/cooperation_circles/detail/uk
info@uri.org

Westminster Interfaith

The agency of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster for Interreligious Dialogue
www.westminsterinterfaith.org.uk/
westminsterinterfaith@rcdow.org.uk
020 7931 6028
Vaughan House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1QN

Women's Interfaith Network

Promoting Friendship, Embracing Difference
www.wominet.org.uk
info@wominet.org.uk
0203 515 2786

World Congress of Faiths

Promoting and sharing the personal values and public value of spiritual life.
www.worldfaiths.org
enquiries@worldfaiths.org
01935 864055
Collaboration House, 77-79 Charlotte Street, London W1T 4PW

Cambridge Inter Faith Programme (CIP)

Dedicated to learning about, learning from, and learning between religions as they interact with a secular and religious world.
www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk
team@interfaith.cam.ac.uk
01223 763 013
Faculty of Divinity, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9BS

Community Religions Project, University of Leeds

Conducting empirical research on religion and religions 'near at hand' in the cities of Leeds and Bradford and beyond.
www.arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp
m.j.prideaux@leeds.ac.uk
0113 3430461
School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science, University of Leeds, G21 Michael Sadler Building, Leeds LS2 9JT

Institute of Jainology

Promoting Jainism and its values through art, culture and education.
www.jainology.org
info@jainology.org
020 8997 2300
Unit 18, Silicon Business Centre, 26/28 Wadsworth Road, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 7JZ

Islamic Foundation

Striving towards building bridges between the Muslim community and the rest of society by creating a better understanding between communities through greater awareness about each other
www.islamic-foundation.org.uk
ataullah@islamic-foundation.org.uk
01530 244944
Markfield Conference Centre, Ratby Lane, Markfield, Leicestershire LE67 9SY

National Association of SACREs

Strengthening the work of local SACREs and supporting them in carrying out all their responsibilities.
www.nasacre.org.uk
secretary@nasacre.org.uk
01785 600260
CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

Representing the collective interests of a wide variety of professional associations and faith communities in deepening and strengthening provision for Religious Education.
religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk
info@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk
0207 250 8166
Religious Education Council, CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH

Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education

Broadening the basis of education at all levels by encouraging the study and teaching of world religions by producing accurate information and resources for those involved with religious education and religious studies.
www.shapworkingparty.org.uk
secretary@shapworkingparty.org.uk
07973 541427
Garners Walk, Madeley, Crewe, CW3 9HG

Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter

Providing a safe environment where people of different faiths can meet together to learn, exchange and grow in understanding of each other.
sioncentre.org
sioncentrefordialogue@gmail.com
020 7313 8286
34 Chepstow Villas, London W11 2QZ

The Woolf Institute

Studying relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims.
www.woolf.cam.ac.uk
enquiries@woolfinstitute.cam.ac.uk
01223 741 048
12-14 Grange Road, Cambridge CB3 9DU

Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE)

A forum for presenting, discussing and responding to issues of relevance to religious education and collective worship in Wales.
www.wasacre.org.uk
libby.jones@glyndwr.ac.uk
4 Patten Close, Hawarden, Deeside CH5 3TH

Overleaf you will find a chart containing information on relevant activities of IFN's National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations and Educational and Academic member bodies. It is aimed at answering the following kinds of reader question:

- **Who do you work with?**
- **What resources can I access?**
- **What can I attend/take part in?**
- **What can I do?**

The accuracy of information provided is the responsibility of the bodies included.

Inter faith opportunities provided by National and Regional Inter Faith, Educational and Academic Member Bodies of IFN

This chart gives an at a glance view of some of the ways that these bodies may be able to assist you.

	WHO DO YOU WORK WITH?		
	Multi Faith (three or more faiths in dialogue)	*Faith groups in dialogue with non-religious belief groups*	*Mainly two faiths in dialogue (bilateral)*
Interfaith Scotland	●	●	
Inter-faith Council for Wales	●		
Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum	●		
3FF, Three Faiths Forum	●	●	
Cambridge Inter-faith Programme	●		
Children of Abraham (Imams and Rabbis Council of the United Kingdom)			Islam, Judaism
Christian Muslim Forum			Christianity, Islam
Council of Christians and Jews			Christianity, Judaism
Council of Dharmic Faiths	●		Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Zoroastriaism
East of England Faiths Agency CIC	●	●	
Faith Awareness – the interfaith programme of Christians Aware	●		
Faiths Forum for London	●		
Hindu Christian Forum			Christianity, Hinduism
Institute of Jainology	●		
International Association for Religious Freedom (British Chapter)	●	●	
International Interfaith Centre, Oxford	●	●	
Islamic Foundation		●	Christianity, Islam
Joseph Interfaith Foundation			Islam, Judaism
London Boroughs Faiths Network	●	●	
London Interfaith Centre	●		
London Society of Jews and Christians			Christianity, Judaism
Maimonides Interfaith Foundation	●		
Multi-Faith Centre, University of Derby	●	●	
National Association of SACRE's (NASACRE)	●		
North East Regional Faiths Network	●	●	
Religions For Peace (UK)	●	●	
Religious Education Council of England and Wales	●	●	
Scriptural Reasoning	●		
Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education			
Sion Centre for Dialogue & Encounter			Christianity, Judaism
South East England Faiths Forum	●	●	
St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace	●		
St Philip's Centre, Leicester	●	●	
Wales Association of SACRE's (WASACRE)	●		
Westminster Interfaith	●	●	
Woolf Institute	●		
Women's Interfaith Network	●		
World Congress of Faiths	●		

WHAT RESOURCES CAN I ACCESS?					WHAT CAN I ATTEND/TAKE PART IN?											WHAT CAN I DO?			
Newsletter/e-bulletin	*Advice and information service*	*Online resources*	*Speakers*	*A staffed office open to the public (by appointment)*	*Conferences/ Seminars/ Workshops*	*Training on inter faith issues/skills*	*Training on dialogue*	*Training on conflict resolution*	*Anti extremism workshops*	*Educational programmes*	*Programmes with academic accreditation*	*Social action projects*	*Young people's programmes*	*Women's programmes*	*An Inter Faith Week event*	*Follow you on social media*	*Become a member*	*Join a local branch*	*Volunteer*
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Front cover photographs
Top left: Participants in dialogue at an IFN day event for local inter faith practitioners, Bristol (Photo: IFN)
Top middle: Student leaders from The Council of Christians and Jews Campus Leadership Programme on a training weekend (Photo: CCJ)
Top right: Members of IFN Faith Communities Forum in dialogue (Photo: IFN)
Bottom left: In conversation at the Zoroastrian Centre at 'Indian Soldiers in WW1' event (Photo: V Kumar Photography)
Bottom middle: Students from Edge Hill University in dialogue during a visit to Guru Harkrishan Sahib Gurdwara, Manchester (Photo: Paul Smalley)
Bottom right: Participants in dialogue at an IFN day event for local inter faith practitioners, Coventry (Photo: IFN)

Back cover photographs
Top left: Dialogue at IFN Faith Communities Forum (Photo: IFN)
Top middle: 'Dialogue on the spot' at IFN meeting (Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)
Top right: Participants in dialogue at IFN's National Meeting (Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)
Bottom left: Participants in dialogue at IFN's Young Voices, Young Agents for Change event (Photo: Myles Fisher for IFN)
Bottom middle: Quiz winners Eastwood High School, Newton Mearns, with Director of Interfaith Scotland at St Ninian's High School, Giffnock (Photo: Interfaith Scotland)
Bottom right: Saraya and Jenny in dialogue as part of the Christian Muslim Forum Near Neighbours Programme (Photo: Dharmendra Patel, Outroslide Photography)

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