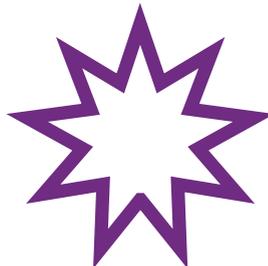
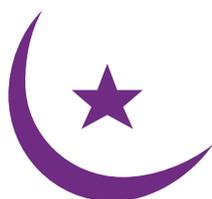




Home Office

WORKING TOGETHER:

Co-operation between Government
and Faith Communities



*Recommendations of the
Steering Group reviewing
patterns of engagement
between Government
and Faith Communities
in England*

Foreword

The Government commissioned this Review because we were increasingly conscious of the importance of effective co-operation with the faith communities, following the highly successful collaborations for the Millennium and Golden Jubilee celebrations, and the growing record of partnership between public agencies and faith communities in the delivery of services.



Previously the record of Government engagement with faith communities has been patchy and we wanted to make sure that all public officials would be in a position to follow best practice. We also wanted to help the faith communities themselves to get more out of their engagement with Departments, and to take a good look at what Government can do centrally to support Departments and faith communities in achieving a mutually beneficial relationship.

The Review brought together an unprecedented assembly of qualified individuals from the faith communities, from within Government and from outside bodies, to address these challenges. The Review Steering Group has been ably chaired by Fiona Mactaggart and the Home Office has provided the secretariat, but this has in no sense been a “Government review”. Rather, it has been a combined effort drawing together a wide range of diverse interests and experts. I believe that all those involved, whether on the Steering Group, the Panel of Advisers or the Working Group, have risen to the challenge, and I warmly welcome their Report and thank them for their efforts.

I can assure all those who have been involved that the Government intends to engage seriously with the recommendations in the Report, so that when the Review reconvenes next year to evaluate its impact there will be good progress to report.

There has never been a more pressing need for productive and respectful engagement between public authorities and faith communities. This Report contains some highly useful guidance and I commend it not just to Departmental Ministers and officials, but to anyone who is engaged with the vital task of mobilising the wider community in resolving the challenges we face.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Blunkett". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

RT HON DAVID BLUNKETT MP

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Summary of recommendations

This Report makes a number of recommendations, for the attention of Government Departments and the faith communities. These are summarised below.

National consultations by departments

The chapter offers guidelines to help Departments improve their engagement with citizens from the faith communities in matters of national policy. They should be read in conjunction with the revised Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Consultation (published January 2004).

Recommendations:

- Follow the Cabinet Office guidelines, which act as both instructions to policy officials and as a benchmark against which external stakeholders can judge consultation exercises.
- Recognise that capacity is a key issue and consider allocating resources to allow faith community bodies, which may lack infrastructure or resources, to participate fully in consultations.
- Involve key stake-holders and bring all interested parties into the consultation.
- Target carefully, ensuring mailing lists are up to date and appropriate.
- Allow enough time, allowing faith communities to take the initiative and make positive suggestions in response to policy proposals.
- Clarify the status of the consultation and consider meeting faith bodies to explain what is expected of them.
- Involve the experts and tap into their knowledge and expertise. Discuss plans for engaging with faith communities with the Home Office Faith Communities Unit.
- Be flexible and recognise the differences between and within faith groups.
- Get the format of paper consultations right, including a summary sheet and flagging up points of possible interest.
- Pursue “faith literacy” and participate in internal faith awareness training.
- Ensure effective day-to-day consultation by supplementing formal consultation with an effective network of informal contacts.
- Ensure that women, young people and older people are represented.
- Include a wide range of faiths and beliefs and be aware of the size of different faiths.
- Publicise and be ready in case there is bad publicity.
- Provide feedback, including an acknowledgement letter.

Advice to faith communities

The chapter suggests various approaches which the faith communities themselves can adopt to get the most out of their dealings with Government. The report will be sent to all the faith representative bodies with which the Government usually does business.

Recommendations:

- Familiarise yourself with Government and take the initiative in raising issues.
- Be persistent, reminding Departments of the importance of involving faith communities.
- Speak with a common voice, coming to the consultation with a position that has been negotiated and agreed in advance.
- Develop appropriate structures to maximise capacity to be an effective partner.
- Be clear and aim to meet deadlines.
- Include women, young people and older people and demonstrate how this has been achieved.
- Become involved in local structures and raise your profile by taking part in consultation.

Events and celebrations

The chapter deals with the specific issue of national services and celebrations, and how to involve the different faith communities in these in a way that reflects the multi faith diversity of the UK without compromising the integrity of the different faiths.

Recommendations:

- Be clear what sort of event is intended, and follow the relevant guidance in the chapter.
- Bring faith representatives into planning well in advance and take into account the needs and sensitivities of different faiths.
- Make sure the date is suitable and does not coincide with any major religious festivals or holy days.
- Ensure that faith communities are properly represented at the event and that women and young people from the faith communities are actively encouraged to attend.

Local and regional consultations by departments

The chapter focuses on how central Government can follow the precedent set by many local authorities and engage effectively with faith communities and inter faith bodies on the local and regional levels.

Recommendations:

- Departments to:
 - Use local inter faith bodies as a focus for consultations, where appropriate.
 - Be sensitive to local and regional differences.
 - Not be deterred from consulting by apparent obstacles.
 - Note advice in the *Compact Code of Good Practice on Community Groups*.
 - Make greater use of existing regional bodies, such as Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices for the Regions, to engage with emerging regional inter faith and single faith structures.
 - Take note of messages contained in Chapter 3 of the final report of the Leeds Pilot Faiths Consultation about what methods of local consultation work best.
 - Identify the most important issues for consulting faith communities, and target resources to allow local faith community bodies to participate properly in these.
- Regional structures to recognise that faith-based bodies are a distinctive part of civil society and of the Voluntary and Community Sector, and can make a significant contribution to social cohesion, and to be willing to open dialogue with them.
- Faith Communities Unit to map the extent to which faith communities are benefiting from funding programmes designed to support Voluntary and Community Sector and Black and Minority Ethnic infrastructure, capacity and projects, and take action to address any deficiencies which emerge.
- Faith Communities Unit, Active Communities Directorate and Government Offices to work with Regional Networks to review the involvement of faith-based bodies and projects in regional structures, and their access to capacity building support, and to encourage the recognition that they are an integral part of the Voluntary and Community Sector and should be included in the mainstream. The results of this review to be considered when the Review members reconvene (see Chapter Six).
- Home Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Local Government Association and Inter Faith Network to look at the way in which the different developments and emerging structural frameworks relate to one another, so as to ensure that they provide a coherent framework for consultation with faith communities at both local and regional level, by national, regional and local government bodies.

Central consultative arrangements

The chapter looks at the present arrangements for dialogue at national level between Government and the faith communities collectively, and discusses whether the existing mechanisms are fit for purpose or whether changes would be desirable.

Recommendations:

- Individual Departments to continue to develop their own effective consultative arrangements, supplemented by Ministerial visits and meetings.
- A broader engagement by Government with faith communities, and where appropriate with groups representing non-religious belief systems, to be undertaken as needed.
- Faith Communities Unit to support capacity building within faith communities by:
 - (i) issuing guidance to Departments running community capacity building programmes on ensuring that faith communities are not excluded;
 - (ii) assessing the degree of access of faith communities to capacity-building funding programmes and pressing for the removal of unnecessary obstacles.
- Faith Communities Unit to support capacity building in Departments by:
 - (i) servicing a new inter departmental official committee, with the aim of mainstreaming faith issues. The committee will provide a vehicle for the exchange of good practice on matters relating to faith and other ethical belief systems and of information about the Government's discussions and consultations with faith communities;
 - (ii) building on and utilising the excellent relationships it has developed with its faith community contacts (including the faith community members of the Review's Working Group and Advisory Panel, the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group, the Inter Faith Network and its Faith Communities Consultative Forum).
- Review members to reconvene in 2005, when the Report's recommendations have been in place for a year, to evaluate the impact of the Review, including on capacity building in Government and faith communities. The assessment to be based on agreed criteria and to take account of the Report's good practice recommendations and of the topics for consultation identified by Departments during the Review. Home Office to prepare papers for this meeting in good time, in consultation with members of the Review.
- At that time, Review members to revisit the question of whether any additional central Government / faith communities forum is needed.
- When consulting faith communities, Departments to consider giving an opportunity to comment to organisations representing those with non-religious beliefs, such as humanists and secularists.
- Evaluation of the impact of this report to include consideration of whether there is any evidence of disadvantage to those who do not hold religious beliefs.
- Faith Communities Unit to include humanists and secularists among its contacts.
- Government to ensure that faith issues are effectively addressed in the programme of work that is now underway to further extend safeguards against discrimination, including the proposed Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

Useful contact details

Home Office Faith Communities Unit

4th floor, Allington Towers
19 Allington Street
London SW1E 5EB
0870 000 1585
public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Inner Cities Religious Council

Community Participation Branch
Floor 4/J10, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5BU
020 7944 4400
icrc@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Inter Faith Network for the UK

8a Lower Grosvenor Place
London
SW1W 0EN
020 7931 7766
ifnet@interfaith.org.uk



Preamble: Why consult faith communities?

Faith - not just a personal issue

76.8% of the United Kingdom population regard themselves as having some religious affiliation (2001 Census). Whilst many of these people will not be actively involved in the worship activities of a faith community, a substantial number are committed members of faith groups whose teachings to a greater or lesser extent guide their values and beliefs.

According to the 2001 Census, 71.6% of the UK population identify themselves as Christian, making this much the largest faith community. There are also significant communities of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and Sikhs as well as smaller communities of Bahá'ís, Jains and Zoroastrians and other traditions.¹

The Christian Churches have had an immense historic influence in shaping society, and make significant contributions in a wide range of areas such as community development, education, social inclusion and heritage. For these reasons, the Churches have made and continue to make a particular and distinctive contribution to the development and implementation of Government policy in certain areas. A key contribution has also been made by the long established Jewish community and is increasingly being made by those faith communities most of whose members are more recently settled in these islands, such as Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Together, the faith communities make an extremely significant contribution to the richness and strength of this diverse but United Kingdom.

Faith community organisations are gateways to access the tremendous reserves of energy and commitment of their members, which can be of great importance to the development of civil society. In the case of some of the newer communities who include among their members many recent arrivals to the UK, these organisations are perhaps the principal gateway since these new arrivals frequently relate to the wider community mostly through trusted organisations serving their religious and or ethnic group.

1 In the 2001 Census, 2.7% of respondents identified themselves as Muslim; 1% as Hindu; 0.6% as Sikh; 0.5% as Jewish; 0.3% as Buddhist; and 0.3% as followers of other religions. 15.5% stated that they had no religious adherence.

Building a partnership

For all these reasons, Government Departments are increasingly coming to realise the importance of engaging with the faith communities just as much as they do with other sections of society, such as the rest of the voluntary sector or ethnic minorities. By consulting people of faith effectively, departments can ensure that their policies meet the needs of these citizens.

Moreover, faith communities have a long tradition of working with their members and others to foster community development. Central Government is increasingly exploring ways of using the experience and resources of faith communities "on the ground" to deliver services.

Experience with the Inner Cities Religious Council at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister suggests that faith communities, if confident that Government genuinely seeks and values their input, will respond at least as well as any other sectors of the broader community. However, much of the onus is on Government to adopt a constructive approach based on sound knowledge of the faith communities.

Moving forward

In recent years there has been a sea-change in the consultation of faith communities. Work done, in particular through the Inner Cities Religious Council and the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, has been influential in changing Government's attitude to the contributions which faith communities can make. Some areas of policy are now routinely recognised by Departments as requiring the input of the faith communities, for example as partners in urban regeneration.

This review welcomes and affirms successful consultations that already take place in various ways, and in no way does it suggest that existing good practice should be recast to fit one prescribed pattern or to flow through one specified channel.

As Appendix 1 makes clear, most departments have realised the necessity of co-operating with faith communities and have begun to construct their own arrangements for doing so. However, these developments have been piecemeal. This report draws on the good practice that already exists, and the perspectives of faith community representatives, to offer a set of recommendations that are designed to make these processes even more effective and widespread across Government.

Introduction

i. Summary

- 1.1.1** Chapter Two of this report offers guidelines to help Departments improve their engagement with citizens from the faith communities in matters of national policy. They should be read in conjunction with the revised Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Consultation (see www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm).
- 1.1.2** Chapter Three suggests various approaches which the faith communities themselves can adopt to get the most out of their dealings with Government. The report will be sent to all the faith representative bodies with which the Government usually does business. Chapter Four deals with the specific issue of national services and celebrations, and how to involve the different faith communities in these in a way that reflects the multi faith diversity of the UK without compromising the integrity of the different faiths.
- 1.1.3** Although the focus of this report is on co-operation between central Government and the faith communities at the national level, it is nevertheless the case that many local authorities have led the way in developing productive relationships with local faith communities and inter faith structures. Chapter Five therefore focuses on how central Government can draw on this useful experience and engage effectively with faith communities on the local and regional levels. It draws on the final report of the Leeds Pilot Consultation Exercise described in the chapter.
- 1.1.4** Chapter Six of the report looks at the present arrangements for dialogue at national level between Government and the faith communities collectively, and discusses whether the existing mechanisms are fit for purpose or whether changes would be desirable. It also addresses issues such as the capacity of faith communities and Government Departments to engage with each other effectively, and the involvement of people with no religious beliefs in consultations.
- 1.1.5** Chapter Six is followed by acknowledgements and the following appendices: a list of all the individual Departmental mechanisms for consulting the faith communities (Appendix 1); some examples of good practice (Appendix 2); the membership and terms of reference of the Review Steering Group and the membership of the Working Group (Appendix 3); a list of websites providing statistical data on faith (Appendix 4); and Chapters 1 to 3 of the final report of the Leeds Pilot Faiths Consultation Exercise (Appendix 5).

ii. Background

The Lambeth Group

- 1.2.1** In 1997 the Churches and Other Faiths sub-group of the Millennium Co-ordinating Group was formed to co-ordinate input by the Christian Churches and other faith communities into the planning of the Millennium celebrations, and to ensure that the religious dimension of the Millennium was reflected in events during the year 2000. The group met at Lambeth Palace under the co-chairmanship of the Archbishop of Canterbury's domestic chaplain and a senior official of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (the Department responsible for the Millennium celebrations). It was therefore generally known as the Lambeth Group.
- 1.2.2** The group brought together representatives of the five largest faith communities (Christian Churches, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and Sikhs), the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, the Government, the Royal Households, the Millennium Commission and the New Millennium Experience Company. Among its many achievements were the publication of guidelines for events organisers (*Marking the Millennium in a Multi Faith Context*), a Faith Zone whose contents were endorsed by representatives of all the faiths involved and which was among the more successful zones in the Millennium Dome, and valuable input into the planning of the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities of the UK in the House of Lords on 3 January 2000.
- 1.2.3** The Lambeth Group, which was wound up in 2001, broke new ground. Never before had structured consultation between the Government and its agencies and the faith communities on the planning of a national celebration been attempted. Alongside the ongoing work of the Inner Cities Religious Council, its clear success set a strong precedent, not only for co-operation and consultation on high-profile State events but also for integration of faith community perspectives into the development of public policy more generally.
- 1.2.4** It was not feasible or appropriate for the Lambeth Group itself to remain in existence once the event that had occasioned its creation had passed. Its members had been nominated to serve in a time-limited capacity on this particular project. It was also felt that consultation by Government Departments on different areas of policy might require different combinations of individuals and faith organisations to be approached.

The Review recommendation

- 1.2.5** Before it dissolved itself the group made a recommendation that a joint Working Group of 10 to 12 officials and faith group representatives be created to carry out a review of faith community representation at, and involvement in, major State events, and of how Government consults and interfaces with faith communities (henceforward "the Review"). The Lambeth Group did not seek to second-guess the outcome of the Review by suggesting what it might

recommend. The Government's acceptance of the recommendation was enshrined in the last Labour Manifesto commitment to '*look at Government's interface with faith communities*'. (This followed an indication by the Prime Minister of his support for this work in a speech to the Christian Socialist Movement in March 2001.)

1.2.6 Whilst responsibility for the Golden Jubilee celebrations remained with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which took care to consult the faith communities over the faith dimension of the celebrations, it fell to the Home Office Race Equality Unit to take forward the Manifesto commitment.

1.2.7 Events since 2000 in the UK and overseas have reinforced the need for Government to engage effectively with faith communities. These events also created a great deal of work for the small Religious Issues team in the Race Equality Unit and made it impossible for the team to take forward the Review as early as it would have liked.

Interim developments

1.2.8 Elsewhere, however, structures were being developed for effective involvement of faith communities in public policy-making. The Inner Cities Religious Council (itself a former member of the Lambeth Group and now part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) continued to do excellent work, including co-operating with the Local Government Association, the Active Community Unit of the Home Office and the Inter Faith Network for the UK to produce in February 2002 *Faith and Community*, a guidance document for local authorities which contained wide-ranging practical advice on how to engage with local faith communities. Other Government Departments such as Department for Trade and Industry and Department for Education and Skills continued to consult effectively with faith groups.

1.2.9 However, arrangements for consulting the faith communities and providing for their representation in policy-making differed widely across Whitehall and it is fair to say that some may have been more effective than others. Consideration therefore began to be given, within the Home Office and elsewhere, to what scope there may be for the standardisation of procedures and the dissemination of good practice.

1.2.10 Meanwhile, the Golden Jubilee celebrations took place in summer 2002. The faith-based events, including visits by members of the Royal Family to faith venues and events, the multi faith Reception at Buckingham Palace on 10 June and the Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum at St.James's Palace on the same day, were judged a great success within the faith communities and elsewhere. As during the Millennium, they flagged up what could be achieved through effective consultation with the faith communities, and gave an additional impetus to the requirement that the Review now be taken forward.

The Review

- 1.2.11** In November 2002 a member of Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Golden Jubilee Office) staff who had acted as Secretary of the Lambeth Group and had also led on the Golden Jubilee faith-based events was seconded to the Race Equality Unit to bring the Review to fruition. In March 2003 Home Office Ministers, with the approval of No.10, agreed that:
- A small Working Group would take forward the “Lambeth Legacy” work, i.e. mapping and assessing existing consultative and representational arrangements, drafting a Report and recommendations, and preparing draft guidelines for Government Departments;
 - This group would report to a Steering Group, comprising Ministers and senior faith representatives, and supported by a Panel of Advisers comprising officials from Departments and delegates from a number of faith bodies not represented on the Steering Group;
 - This high-level group, which would aim to report at the end of 2003, would consider how to involve faith communities in policy development across Whitehall and identify key upcoming policy areas where the faiths might usefully be consulted.
- 1.2.12** The Review was formally launched with the first meeting of the Steering Group in June 2003 (when it was also announced in Parliament). The membership and terms of reference of the Steering Group and the membership of the Working Group are set out in Appendix 3. The Working Group met eight times during the Review process and the Steering Group four times.
- 1.2.13** In October 2003 the Religious Issues section of the Home Office Race Equality Unit was reconstituted to form the new Faith Communities Unit, which assumed responsibility for the Review alongside its growing volume of other work.
- 1.2.14** The creation of the new Unit itself reflects the growing recognition by Government that religious affiliation continues to be one of the most important ways in which people living in the United Kingdom identify themselves. It is an important mechanism through which the Government will discharge its responsibility to develop its understanding of how faith communities are organised and represented, and of their needs, concerns and perspectives; to widen and deepen its engagement with them; and to assure them that it is listening and responding to their concerns.
- 1.2.15** Chapter Six of the following report recommends that the members of the Review should reconvene early in 2005, when the recommendations have been in place for a year, to evaluate what impact the Review has had. The Home Office will begin preparing papers for this meeting in good time, in consultation with members of the Review.

Consulting faith communities nationally

i. Background and introduction

- 2.1.1** This chapter draws on the results of an exercise carried out by the Review Working Group during April and May 2003. This sought to map existing patterns of consultation of faith communities by Departments, and to identify both good and unsatisfactory practice. Departmental returns are set out in Appendix 1. The exercise was supplemented by comments offered by members of the group, based on their personal experience of consultative processes, whether as members of consulted faith organisations or as officials of Departments carrying out consultations.
- 2.1.2** In early 2003 around 140 Information Gathering Questionnaires were sent by the Home Office to faith representative bodies². As well as seeking information on these organisations' aims and activities, the Questionnaire invited bodies to comment on their own experience of being consulted. Some of these returns have contributed to this chapter.
- 2.1.3** Through these channels a number of shortcomings in the consultative practice adopted by many Government Departments were identified, and these are summarised in Section (iv) of this chapter. These in turn suggested a number of corresponding principles for effective consultation with faith communities. These are presented in Section (ii) which is preceded by a flow-diagram which Departments may find helpful.
- 2.1.4** Section (iii) describes some of the features of successful multi faith consultations, where Government is seeking the input of several different faith communities represented on the same body. This draws on the successful precedents of the Lambeth Group at the time of the Millennium celebrations, and the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group³. The aim of the section is to help Departments to construct consultative arrangements involving a number of different faith communities in a way that creates the right conditions for constructive engagement with them. Section (v) provides suggestions for where

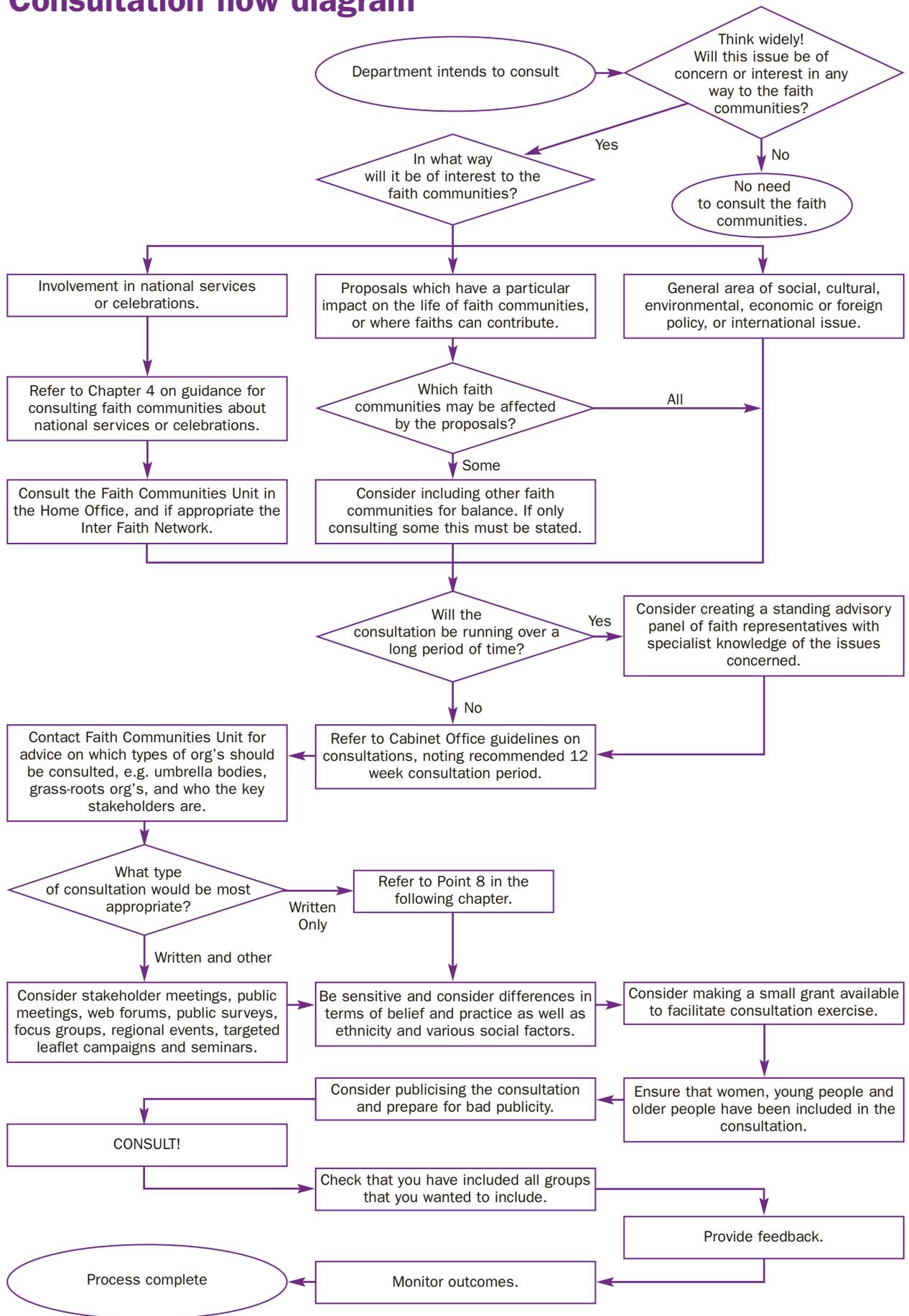
2 Some of these bodies are umbrella bodies, i.e. organisations bringing together a number of smaller bodies and able to offer a collective view, or to co-ordinate and collate a diversity of views, on behalf of all or part of a faith community. Government Departments would usually wish to consult these.

3 The Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group has been one of the thematic consulting groups, feeding into the Community Cohesion Panel, which the Home Office set up and facilitated in order to provide a forum for discussion, inform Government thinking on community cohesion issues and provide an opportunity to suggest change. The Panel was set up on the recommendation of the Denham and Cattle Reports, which followed the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the summer of 2001.

further advice can be sought. There is a summary sheet at the end of the chapter, on pages 31 and 32, which Departments may wish to photocopy for quick reference.

- 2.1.5** Whilst the Review as a whole recognised the importance of faith communities taking the initiative in raising issues on which they wish to engage in dialogue with the Government, clearly the initiative will often come from within Departments as they develop new policies. This chapter is about good practice and its purpose is to help build capacity within Departments for effective engagement with faith communities. It reflects the view that in order for progress to be made, faith issues need to be mainstreamed rather than becoming the responsibility of a centralised forum. (The question of whether a supra-Departmental national faith forum is needed is looked at in detail in Chapter Six.)
- 2.1.6** The above guidelines accord with and supplement the revised Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Written Consultations (see www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm). The new code, issued on 20 January 2004, is intended both to provide instructions to policy officials and to act as a benchmark against which external stakeholders can judge consultation exercises. It should be read by consulting Departments alongside this Report.

Consultation flow diagram



ii. Key principles of effective consultation

1) *Be aware of capacity issues*

2.2.1 Consulting Departments need to recognise that the capacities of different faith community bodies vary widely and that this will impose constraints. They should always bear in mind that some faith community bodies may lack infrastructure or resources. Departments should therefore consider making small, targeted grants available, possibly in advance, to bodies to facilitate particular consultation exercises. Organisations should be advised early on if funding will not be available.

2.2.2 Whilst generally faith communities do not seek Government funding to help them practise their religion, they may take the opportunity of a consultation exercise to bid for funds to help them deliver a community service where this is what Government wants them to do (perhaps to buy in specialist skills). Departments should anticipate this and develop an appropriate response.

2.2.3 Moreover, officials should be aware that faith community organisations are fully eligible to apply for support from funding programmes designed to support Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure and projects, though with the usual stipulation that a government grant must not be used to fund religious or proselytising activity.

2) *Involve key stake-holders.*

2.2.4 Bring all parties with an interest into the consultation process. This may necessitate the creation of different levels of consultation – e.g. a mailing, a working group, a wider reference group, and bilateral face-to-face meetings with individual faith communities or bodies as required.

2.2.5 Key stake-holders include Government Ministers, senior figures within the faith communities and umbrella organisations: high-level endorsement of the aims and methods of the consultation can help secure the active participation of the faith communities. It may not be necessary to consult all stakeholders at every stage, but their endorsement should be sought at key developmental stages. If Departments are finding it difficult to identify senior figures in faith communities they can contact the Home Office Faith Communities Unit or the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom for assistance (contact details are at the end of this chapter), or an umbrella organisation within the particular faith community.

3) *Target carefully*

2.2.6 Mailing lists should be up to date and appropriate before consultations are sent. Approaches should be pitched at the right level within communities and organisations: “on the ground” practitioners may have better access to information and local knowledge and networks than senior religious leaders. Regional or local faith bodies should be approached where these are known to have relevant expertise (see Chapter Five).

2.2.7 Departments should think about *why* they want to involve faith communities. As well as having onerous resource implications for faith community organisations, it is not an efficient use of Departmental resources to scatter consultation documents as widely as possible for the sake of it. However, if the Department believes that a faith community has a legitimate deep interest in a subject, it will want to seek the views of as wide a range of organisations within a faith community as possible, and include any body which it is thought *might* have an interest.

2.2.8 Where possible, however, faith communities should be given the opportunity to signal when a consultation is not relevant to them, and also if there are any other bodies within their community which should be consulted. Any future planned consultations should ideally be indicated, and recipients given the opportunity to state whether they are suitable for future consultations.

4) *Allow enough time*

2.2.9 Good consultation should allow the faith communities the opportunity to take the initiative and make positive suggestions in response to policy proposals, rather than passively reacting to them. This takes time. Departments should recognise that faith bodies will each have a different network and organisational structure. They may lack in-house expertise in specialist issues, and enough time should be allowed for them to refer to outside experts or consult within their communities.

2.2.10 The standard 12 weeks required by the Cabinet Office's Code of Consultation may therefore not be adequate for some faith communities. Departments should be flexible and consider allowing an extension to be negotiated, though this may not always be possible. Consultations should state the deadline, whether late returns can be considered, and what happens after the consultation.

2.2.11 Good advance warning that a consultation is imminent is helpful, since this allows the document to be targeted at the right organisations and referred to the right people within an organisation. Sufficient time to consider it can also be timetabled. Where a multi faith consultative mechanism like a working group is planned, allocating sufficient time to the preparatory stages allows the right faith community representatives to be brought together and enables them to get to know and trust one another.

5) *Clarify the status of the consultation*

2.2.12 There are many different types of consultation: those focusing on issues about which faith communities are one interest group among many; those relating to issues (whether religious or not) of special interest to faith communities and where the faiths are the principal focus of consultation; consultations about or invitations to national or civic events; and high-level "getting to know you" or problem-solving meetings with senior politicians (which are much valued by faith communities.)

2.2.13 Departments should always clarify the status of the consultation. For instance, where expertise is being sought, does this relate to the religious beliefs and practice of a faith community, which one of its religious leaders can best provide; or is a statement wanted expressing the viewpoint of the community as a group within society, which a community leader could provide? Where possible, Departments should meet with faith bodies in advance to explain this and make clear what is expected of them.

2.2.14 Officials should be aware that faith communities draw a distinction between consultation on matters of Government policy, which are in the realm of political debate and disagreement, and consultations on “matters of state” (e.g. national celebrations and nominations for Honours) which are seen as a focus of United Kingdom unity. The way they respond to consultations, for instance which body takes responsibility for responding, will often depend on which of these categories they perceive a consultation to fall into.

6) *Involve the experts*

2.2.15 Valuable expertise located within the Faith Communities Unit and Inter Faith Network should be tapped early on and at regular intervals during a consultation. Decisions about which organisations and individuals to consult within faith communities are often not straightforward, and organisations are continuously evolving. Contact details for the Unit and the Network are at the end of this chapter.

2.2.16 Inter faith bodies and faith umbrella organisations are helpful repositories of advice, though sufficient time must be given to them to respond. Umbrella organisations vary greatly in their structure, authority and representativeness. The role they can play is one of collating views, which may be diverse, rather than construing consensus for the benefit of a consulting Department. Departments need to be aware of that distinction and consider in each case whether consultation of a particular community needs to be pursued beyond written consultation.

2.2.17 Faith communities’ global networks such as development agencies can offer much to Government thinking and service delivery in international policy, and their extensive local and institutional ministry networks can make a distinct contribution to community cohesion work in the United Kingdom.

2.2.18 Sharing results with other bodies carrying out consultations, e.g. local authorities, and making use of their findings is valuable and avoids over-lap. Aim for joined-up thinking and a systematic approach. Continuity is important in securing the co-operation of faith bodies.

7) *Be flexible*

2.2.19 Departments should recognise the differences between faith groups and between the major traditions within individual faith communities, and consult them in a way that encourages each to make its particular contribution. There

are many different patterns of consultation: with individual communities, or with small or larger groupings of faiths. Much depends on the nature of the issue: the pattern of consultation suitable for one occasion may not be appropriate for another, especially if on uncharted territory. New partners may need to be drawn in. Departments should be aware of the different possibilities and recognise the importance of flexibility.

2.2.20 Departments should inform the relevant umbrella bodies whenever an issue has gone out to consultation with smaller groupings or individual organisations such as places of worship, and should send them a list of those bodies that have been consulted (subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act). The umbrella bodies can then ensure that all who might have an interest have been consulted.

2.2.21 In this context it should be noted that individual faith traditions such as Christian denominations might not always want to make their contributions through umbrella bodies. In some cases, individual traditions or Churches would be the subjects of consultation; in others, two or three might work together; in yet others views might be shared across the ecumenical, or indeed the inter faith, range.

2.2.22 Finally, Departments should recognise that engagement is a two-way process: it should not be restricted to faith communities simply reacting to Departmental policy consultations. Faith communities will have their own agendas and issues which they will want to bring to the attention of Government, and officials should be prepared to give these proper consideration on their merits.

8) *Get the format of paper consultations right*

2.2.23 Consultative documents should be set out clearly in plain English. Where possible, multiple choice tick boxes should be included, with a “not applicable” response allowed. Sufficient space should be provided for replies to be backed up by additional information or for reasons to be given why a “not applicable” reply is appropriate. Headings and questions should be sensitively framed (see Point 9 below).

2.2.24 Documents should feature a summary sheet at the front, clearly labelled with the name of the consulting Department and indicating what the consultation is for, why the body is being consulted, what the deadline is, what happens next, and the names and details of the Departmental contact. Subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act, it is helpful if an indication can also be given of which other faith bodies have been consulted.

2.2.25 When sending out bulky or complex documents, Departments should flag up particular points of interest to faith communities. Departments should send documents in the form of an e-mail backed up by a hard copy, and if possible by placing a copy in editable format on the Departmental website, with the address notified to the faith bodies.

9) **“Faith literacy”**

- 2.2.26** Departments should be aware that they and faith communities may come to consultations with different sets of philosophical and moral assumptions, adding to complexity and sometimes causing tension. Sufficient time should therefore be given for both sides to meet and remove misunderstandings.
- 2.2.27** Departments should always be wary of making a false assumption that a certain ethnicity always implies a particular faith adherence, e.g. that people of South Asian origin will always be Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. There are, for instance, many Indian Christians and Muslim Africans. Officials should also try to inform themselves of different traditions and doctrinal disagreements within a faith community and of gender issues, and broaden the consultative base if necessary.
- 2.2.28** Increasingly Departments are incorporating faith issues within staff diversity training programmes. The Inner Cities Religious Council’s seminars for Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Department for Transport staff are an excellent example of this. The Inter Faith Network’s recent mapping project (see 5.2.3-5.2.5) found that 44% of local authorities in England and Wales now have an officer responsible for liaison with faith groups in their area. Government Departments may wish to consider following this example by appointing an official to take particular responsibility for faith issues, liaise on faith issues with the Faith Communities Unit and promote greater general faith literacy within the Department. This role might be given to the existing Voluntary and Community Sector liaison officer, or to the staff member leading on internal implementation of the Article 13 employment regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion or sexual orientation.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Multi-Faith Week

In the week beginning 6 October 2003, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office held a Multi-Faith Week. The aim of the event was to launch a step-change in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s relations with the faith communities, and flowed from the Government’s Manifesto commitment to review its relationship with these communities. The week comprised a Music and Faith evening to launch the event, a seminar to enact a new policy dialogue, a reception and a Public Open Day.

The week was a successful beginning to a new process of engagement. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office reached out to different faiths, not just the largest, and many different parts of each community were represented at the events. There was useful interaction at different levels throughout the week: between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the faith communities, between those from different faiths and between those from within a faith.

The credibility of a new dialogue will clearly depend on the follow-up to the Week. Following consultations, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be issuing a programme shortly of next steps to take this process forward.

10) Ensure effective day-to-day consultation

2.2.29 Formal consultation needs to be supplemented by an effective network of informal contacts within the faith communities who can be approached on an *ad hoc* basis. However, care should be taken that working with these “tried and tested” contacts does not preclude taking account of differing views to be found within a particular faith community.

2.2.30 Where a Department needs to consult closely with faith communities over a long period of time, it may make sense to create a standing advisory panel of “faith practitioners”, that is to say individuals with a good personal knowledge of faith communities or of specific policy areas with a faith dimension. This approach will ensure that the right people are always available to advise (though it may require additional resources). Departments might wish to invite faith umbrella organisations to nominate individuals to sit on such a panel, or seek advice from the Faith Communities Unit in order to identify suitable “experts”. Section (iii) sets out some of the features of successful multi faith consultations.

11) Ensure that women, young people and older people are represented

2.2.31 Historically it has been particularly difficult for Departments to bring the perspectives of women, young people and older people from the faith communities into consultative processes. Whilst respecting the traditions of all faith communities, the Government is now committed to doing so. It is recognised that there have always been women, young people and older people from all faith backgrounds who have challenged norms and made a prominent contribution to public life. Nevertheless, this Review is about reaching those citizens within these groups who have not thus overcome the many factors inhibiting them from full engagement and participation.

2.2.32 In the case of women, certain faith communities have always explicitly encouraged equal participation by men and women in public affairs. In other communities, however, this has not been the case to the same degree. Among more newly settled members of faith communities, poor command of English and culturally based self-effacement and deference to male family members have inhibited many women from being put forward to attend events and from influencing policy-making through the normal routes of voting, lobbying, writing to MPs and so on. Yet women of faith have many experiences and perspectives to offer which are different to those of men. In most faith communities women are the backbone of places of worship and local faith-based organisations.

2.2.33 Equally, young people from some minority faith communities have been subject to the same sense of disconnection from these political processes as their peers from mainstream Christian or non-religious backgrounds, perhaps exacerbated by culturally conditioned respect and deference to older people. Nevertheless they can bring their own fresh and relevant perspectives to issues, and often have separate needs. In the case of older people, whilst many community and religious leaders within the faith communities are elderly men, there are also a great many elderly men and women who are inhibited by poor language skills and lack of confidence from participating fully in public life in this country.

2.2.34 Where appropriate, Departments should make clear on the cover sheet of any consultation that they expect the views of women, young people and older people to be included in any response from the faith communities. They should encourage faith organisations to explain how they have reached these groups. Departments should also tap into the good work being done by the Women and Equality Unit and Children and Young People's Unit (see boxes) and consider using some more focused consultative methods, such as conferences and seminars, directly to access the views of these harder-to-reach sections of the faith communities. Departments that already work with these groups should aim to include the faith dimension when consulting.

Women from the faith communities

The Women and Equality Unit in the Department for Trade and Industry takes the lead within Government on women's issues. Its aim is to reduce and remove barriers to opportunity for all. The nature of its work requires consultation with minority ethnic groups and faith communities throughout society. The Unit uses various methods of consultation such as consultation documents, roundtables, conferences, seminars and visits. It makes use of the Cabinet Office's consultation guidelines, and of advice from the Home Office Faith Communities Unit on the right faith groups to contact during consultation exercises.

The efforts that the Unit has made to engage with women from faith communities in different policy areas demonstrate that there are a variety of ways in which this group can be reached:

- *Commission for Equality and Human Rights:* The Government announced in May 2002 that it was undertaking the most significant review of equality in over a quarter of a century. A conference was organised by the Women and Equality Unit in July 2002 which brought together stakeholders across the equality spectrum, and many faith groups were represented. Separately the Minister for Women and other Ministers held seminars and conferences and visited groups around the country including faith groups.
- *Muslim Women's Group:* The Minister for Women holds regular six-monthly meetings with an invited group of Muslim women, to discuss issues that particularly affect them and to gauge interest and allow for input into other areas of Government policy. The group includes academics, members of non-governmental organisations including charities working with the Muslim community, business women, other women who are active in public life and members of the broader Muslim community.
- *Women into public appointments:* During 2002, the Minister for Women led a national outreach campaign to encourage more women to take up public appointments. A national event was held in Leicester to target women from ethnic minorities. Over 200 mostly Muslim and Hindu women attended. Women were given the opportunity to inform and influence Government policy by providing their written views on the barriers faced by ethnic minority women, and what the Government could do to help lift those barriers. Feedback indicated that this opportunity was much appreciated by the women.

- *Prime Minister and Minister for Women meeting with Asian Women:* This provided an opportunity for the women, who were predominantly of the Muslim and Hindu faiths, to question the Prime Minister and the Minister for Women about how Government policy affects their lives. Their views were fed into the minority ethnic work programme that the Women and Equality Unit has developed.
- *Joseph Rowntree Foundation research:* In October 2002 the Unit, in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, launched research on black women's organisations. The researchers visited a number of organisations within the African and South Asian communities and identified a need for culturally and religiously sensitive childcare services for Asian mothers. A range of focus groups were held specifically targeting mothers from Asian, African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, North African and Chinese backgrounds including Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Christian faiths.

Young people from the faith communities

The Children and Young People's Unit in the Department for Education and Skills leads on the development of Government policies geared at children and young people, and supports Ministers, including the Minister for Young People, as they develop, refine and communicate the Government's overarching strategy in this area. The Unit is tasked with joining up policy-making across Departments and removing barriers to effective working. As part of this work it is promoting active dialogue and partnership with children and young people, and with the voluntary sector.

The Unit has consulted widely across the country to ensure that children and young people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds benefit from Government policies. Whilst it has not specifically targeted particular faith communities, it insists on diversity and expects to see multi faith representation in groups of young people who become involved in its work.

12) *Include a wide range of faiths and beliefs*

2.2.35 Consultation should include a sufficiently wide range of faith communities. The nine historic faith communities linked by the Inter Faith Network are Bahá'ís, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Sikhs, Muslims and Zoroastrians, and all should be involved in national consultations where faith communities are being approached individually. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to include other faith groups as well (e.g. Rastafarians or Pagans).

2.2.36 There needs to be awareness of the complications involved in approaching new religious movements. Useful advice on this can be obtained from Faith Communities Unit or INFORM (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements). The latter is an independent charity, based at the London School of Economics, which researches new religious movements and provides objective information to the public, Government, the media, and academics.

2.2.37 If the consultation is being taken forward through a group bringing together different faiths, it is again preferable to include representatives of all the nine

faith communities linked by the Inter Faith Network. If on rare occasions it proves impossible to include all nine faiths, the five numerically largest communities (Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews) should be included, and officials should explore with the smaller faith communities (Buddhists, Jains, Bahá'ís and Zoroastrians) how to choose one trusted person to take part in the consultation on behalf of all of them, while recognising that this person could not be expected to fully represent the views of any but his or her own community. Officials need to be aware of the size of different faiths nationally and in any area of special focus for a particular project, but the smaller communities may also be able to make a valuable contribution in terms of knowledge, skills, ideas and experience.

2.2.38 Engagement by Departments with faith communities should not only extend to the minority communities: the Christian Churches are a crucial constituency and should always be included in consultations. While the Church of England is the Established Church in England, it should not be accorded privileged status in such consultations. Often Departments will choose to consult through an ecumenical body (the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Churches Main Committee where the consultation is UK-wide, and/or Churches Together in England if it is England only). However, if a decision is taken to canvass the views of the Church of England, for instance on matters with a doctrinal dimension (e.g. civil partnerships), it would normally be appropriate to approach other prominent Christian traditions: as a minimum, the Roman Catholic Church, the Free Churches, and Black Majority Churches (Churches Together in England or the Faith Communities Unit can advise on how best to do so).

2.2.39 There are other organisations (e.g. the National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association) which are not themselves religious but which hold relevant views on issues with an ethical dimension and on the extent of religious influence in public life. Departments should normally give these organisations the opportunity to comment. If Departments plan to change policy following contributions to consultation from the faith communities they must ensure that there is no adverse effect, whether absolute or relative, on people of different beliefs or who hold no religious beliefs.

13) *Publicise and be ready in case there is bad publicity*

2.2.40 It may be helpful to publicise a consultation through the ethnic minority and religious media. Openness and transparency are desirable features of consultation. Departments consulting faith communities, either individually or collectively, also need to anticipate that they may attract criticism from within the faith communities about which bodies or individuals have been chosen for the purpose of consultation; or from the media and elsewhere. Departments ought also to be aware that some secular organisations have concerns about the influence of faith groups on Government. Adverse criticism is more likely where secular/humanist organisations have not been transparently consulted, but in any case it may be wise to be prepared to mount a publicity and media handling strategy to answer any such criticism, and to justify decisions taken.

14) Provide feedback

2.2.41 Where possible, a “what happened next” letter is an encouragement to faith communities to co-operate in future consultations. It is recommended that at the least, an acknowledgement should be sent. Departments might also make a follow-up call to participating faith organisations, midway through a consultation process, to check on progress and offer advice if needed. Finally, Departments might consider giving faith organisations the chance to proof-read the final version of appropriate sections of developing policy documents, so as to ensure that their views have not been misrepresented.

iii. Features of successful multi faith consultation

2.3.1 Even when a Department is not creating a standing advisory panel (see paragraph 2.2.30), it may choose for various reasons to bring a number of faith communities together for consultation purposes, perhaps in a time-limited working group, rather than consulting faith communities individually. The following section lists some of the features of successful multi faith consultations. These should be born in mind by Departments in addition to the principles set out above.

1. Good (existing) relationships between individuals

2.3.2 Many members of the Lambeth Group had worked together frequently before, within the Inter Faith Network and elsewhere, and knew and trusted each other well. The same is true of the membership of the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group. Established relationships and a history of “previous battles fought together” bring a confidence that no-one at the table has hidden agendas. (This does not, however, mean that the inclusion of new individuals should not be considered.) Good relationships are revealed in many ways, including “emotional intelligence”, humour and a willingness to volunteer for tasks. Where possible, structures need to be in place and good working relationships built up before the actual consultation takes place.

2. A high profile

2.3.3 The Millennium celebrations had a very high profile, manifested in Royal and Cabinet-level involvement, widespread media coverage, and the commitment by Government of substantial time and resources to make the celebrations a success. There was therefore particular pressure on the Lambeth Group to be seen to deliver results, which reinforced the positive approach which members in any case took to their involvement in what was a highly prestigious occasion.

3. Shared values

2.3.4 All the faith communities have basic values in common, defined at the time of the Millennium as community; personal integrity; a sense of right and wrong; learning, wisdom and love of truth; care and compassion; justice and peace; and

respect for one another and for the earth and its creatures. As well as subscribing to these, all those involved in successful multi faith consultations might be expected to share a commitment to the principles of effective co-operation, such as well-mannered discussion, stating positions honestly, negotiating realistically, and producing results.

4. *Enthusiasm within the faith communities*

2.3.5 Although it is important for the consulting Department to commit time and resources to the consultation, it is crucial for there to be a genuine desire on the part of the faith communities to add value to an initiative or to influence its development. It can be helpful to invite a body outside Government which links faith communities together, such as the Inter Faith Network, to be associated with the consultation process.

5. *Broad endorsement within participating faiths*

2.3.6 It is very unlikely that a multi faith consultative mechanism such as a working group will be able to include all the significant traditions or shades of opinion within each faith community. If there is sufficient time, the consulting Department may therefore choose also to conduct a full consultation exercise seeking the views of other organisations within the faith communities, to supplement the working group.

2.3.7 If this is not possible, the co-ordinators of the multi faith project should take pains to ensure that the main traditions within a faith community have endorsed the approach which the respective faith representative on the group intends to take. The agreement of these traditions that the delegate is an appropriate person to represent their disparate traditions and opinions should also be secured. The Inter Faith Network is often able to advise on the sensitivities involved.

6. *Clear goals and outputs*

2.3.8 There is a danger that consultation groups can develop into “talking shops” with no defined programmes of work. Bodies involved in multi faith consultations need to have a clear idea of what they are being asked to contribute to and the timescale for doing so. The goals and desired outputs will influence the choice of membership and the group’s terms of reference in the first place, and serve to concentrate its efforts once it has begun work. Once the work is complete the group should be dissolved unless a clear new purpose for its existence has arisen.

7. *A sponsoring Government Department*

2.3.9 At the time of the Millennium celebrations it was noted by the faith community representatives on the Lambeth Group that the willingness of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to contribute time and resources, including a co-Chair, to the group was a crucial factor in its success. By sitting on the steering group

co-ordinating a national project, the sponsoring Department can facilitate its work, perhaps by meeting members' travel expenses, publication costs or the salary costs of a key individual. Through its own presence on the group, it can also raise the profile of the consultative process and ensure that its outputs are taken seriously by other parts of Government. The faith representatives on the steering group may find it helpful to have an arrangement whereby they hold a pre-meeting before officials of the sponsoring Department arrive.

8. “Chatham House rules”

2.3.10 Remarks by a member of one tradition or group within a faith community can in some situations be misconstrued or misrepresented by other traditions or groups within the community. For members of a multi faith group to feel free to speak candidly, therefore, there may be a need for their contributions not to be attributed in any written record of the proceedings without their clear agreement, or for members to be given the opportunity to correct a minute at the following meeting. Equally, discussions should not be videoed or electronically recorded without express permission of all members.

iv. Obstacles to effective consultation

2.4.1 The following factors diminish the effectiveness of consultations.

1) *Insufficient capacity within organisations*

2.4.2 The management and staffing capacity of faith representative bodies can be limited. For instance, they may lack paid full-time workers. Volunteers cannot always respond effectively to consultations, owing to other commitments (e.g. it may be difficult to travel to London on a working day). Moreover, they may not come from a professional background and so find it difficult to respond to (sometimes voluminous) official documents which require legal expertise to follow. Organisations may not have systems in place to disseminate information and collate input. Those that have, i.e. the more active bodies, can therefore get called upon to be involved in everything, leading to “consultation fatigue”.

2) *Lack of adequate time*

2.4.3 Volunteers putting together responses may have limited time available, and Departmental timescales are often unrealistically short (sometimes much less than the recommended 12 weeks). This is a particular problem when it is necessary for bodies to approach other affected organisations or expert individuals, for whom the issue may be of a low priority, in order to respond fully. Faith communities are voluntary associations depending on goodwill and consensus, and this is not often enough recognised by Government.

2.4.4 Where bodies have missed deadlines and have not negotiated extensions, responses are nevertheless sometimes sent months after consultations have finished, on the basis that any answer is better than none. Although these may

be well thought out, the policy may have moved on and the effort spent in their preparation has therefore not had the effect it might have had. Some faith groups are better than others at negotiating extensions to deadlines in good time, and keeping Government in touch with what is going on.

3) *Misguided assumptions*

2.4.5 Everyone makes certain ethical, cultural or philosophical assumptions, but Departmental officials can embark on consultations without recognising that they have made these or examining them critically. They may not be familiar with religious convictions held by faith communities. Departments can fail to recognise that sometimes it is not possible to produce a consolidated response for the whole of a faith community (e.g. different groupings have different views on faith schools). Consultations sometimes fail to distinguish between community and faith, and “faith” is sometimes used to refer only to faith communities other than the Christian Churches. Newer Christian groupings are sometimes left out of consultations.

2.4.6 Moreover deep confusion can exist within the faith communities about who within the Government, and within individual Departments, is responsible for relations with the faith communities.

4) *Inaccessibility of funding*

2.4.7 Sometimes faith communities find it difficult to access funding for voluntary and community projects. There remains a suspicion within Government that funding for projects with a faith ethos will be used to promote a particular religion. Though attitudes are relaxing, suspicion of religious groups remains in some quarters. (When this happens, the involvement of a secular partner agency can help emphasise a community welfare focus.) There is sometimes insufficient consultation at an early stage over funding criteria. Blanket rules requiring inter faith partnership in every situation are unhelpful: these can be inappropriate or impractical.

5) *Poor targeting*

2.4.8 Sometimes faith community organisations receive material that is of no conceivable interest. At other times important organisations are inexplicably omitted from consultations, or the material is sent to the wrong individual or office within an organisation. Consultation is often seen as unsystematic.

6) *Lack of sampling frame*

2.4.9 Although many faith representative bodies have a structure which gives legitimacy to what they say on behalf of their people, some do not. In these cases it can be difficult to obtain representative views from the respective faith community because of the lack of a suitable sampling frame that reflects the ethnic, gender and age profile of the community. Although larger bodies are sometimes able to sample their affiliate organisations, further research needs to

be carried out if there is to be genuine evidence-based consultation and policy making in the future. The Faith Communities Unit has addressed this issue through a mapping exercise designed to establish faith representative organisations' record of engagement with Government and to gauge their status and reach into their respective communities. The 2001 Census results can also help Departments assess which faith communities it is most important to consult in different parts of the country (see Appendix 4).

7) ***“Not really a consultation”***

2.4.10 Government approaches are sometimes seen by the faith communities not as consultation at all but as a request to co-operate with a pre-determined and immutable plan. Sometimes questions are simplistic and do not allow a nuanced response. It is worth noting, however, that some consultations will be regarded as unsatisfactory by some faith communities even if the process has been well conducted, if they result in recommendations or policies with which they do not agree.

v. Further advice

2.5.1 **The Faith Communities Unit at the Home Office** is a central source of advice to Departments on a wide range of issues relating to the faith communities in the UK, and can also provide contact details for faith community representative bodies that may be approached for specialist advice, included in consultations or invited to events. Departments are strongly recommended to discuss all intended consultations, and all planned events, celebrations or projects involving the faith communities (e.g. memorial services), with the Unit. The Unit should not, however, be regarded as a “gate keeper” for consultations.

2.5.2 **The Inner Cities Religious Council**, part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, exists particularly to seek input from faith communities in matters relating to urban regeneration. Its Secretary can advise on issues relating to faith and urban policy.

2.5.3 **The Inter Faith Network for the UK** was founded in 1987 to promote good relations between people of different faiths. It has in membership national representative faith community bodies; national and local inter faith organisations initiatives; and academic and educational bodies. It is the first port of call for advice on local and national inter and multi faith initiatives.

2.5.4 Contact details are given in the Summary Sheet on pages 31-32.

Effective consultation – a view from within the faith communities

The faith communities represented on the Review Steering Group offer the following perspective on what makes for effective consultations between Government and the faith communities.

1. Genuine readiness on the part of Government to listen and actually hear what the faith communities are saying. None of us want to be part of a window-dressing exercise.
2. Genuine readiness on the part of the faith communities to speak honestly (but not in an adversarial spirit), based on their beliefs and values, about their experiences and perceptions of life in the UK, about the Government's handling of issues that affect faith communities, and about the advice they can offer the Government. The faith communities can offer an important critique of Government policy and delivery from the perspective of their beliefs and values and experiences. It is important that the faith communities do not approach consultation as a territory-defending exercise.
3. Willingness on the part of Government to speak honestly about what it hears. Not everything that the faith communities say can be accepted without critique and evaluation. The Government has to make choices and judgements, often based on a wider view than the faith communities have.
4. Patience and forbearance on everyone's part and a willingness to collaborate (when collaboration is appropriate). Faith communities should not come with demands that they expect to be met without question. Government should not see the faith communities merely as a means of delivering policy. Faith communities often have particular expertise to bring to the discussion.
5. A willingness on everyone's part to see consultation as an 'us and us' process rather than as 'us and them'. Government is 'us' with a particular set of tasks to do to govern the country and enable all people to live fruitful lives. We should not approach the consultation with an adversarial mindset.
6. It is important for the Government to understand the diversity of the faith communities - each faith community is different from the others and there is often much diversity within faith communities, in terms of belief and practice as well as of ethnicity and various social indicators. There is no one faith voice.
7. In light of the above, it is vital that the Government be sensitive to the challenges of finding representative voices from the faith communities.
8. It is essential for the Government to keep open the channels of communication with the faith communities, both directly and through organisations such as the Inter Faith Network. Feedback on the results of consultation will help the faith communities feel that their views are being heard and should also help them shape their input to policy-making and so on.
9. Consultation may be formal or informal. There are set-piece consultations, for example on White Papers, but often the more fruitful consultations are the less formal meetings between Ministers or officials and representatives of faith communities.

Consulting faith communities – summary of key points

This section summarises particular considerations which Departments should bear in mind when consulting faith communities, over and above the usual principles of effective consultation. It is intended as an aide-memoire for officials.

- Include a wide range of faiths and beliefs. Among the faith communities are Christians (including black Christians), Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Buddhists, Jains, Bahá'ís and Zoroastrians. If you are not consulting all faiths you should state this and explain why.
- Understand the diversity of the faith communities. Each faith community is different and there is often much diversity within faith communities, in terms of belief and practice, as well as ethnicity and various social indicators. Be aware of sensitivities and understand that there is no single voice of the faith communities.
- Ensure that you are contacting the organisations that can best represent the views of their faith communities on the specific issues on which you are consulting. The Home Office's Faith Communities Unit and the Inter Faith Network for the UK can help here.
- Consider different forms of consultation. Focus groups, meetings and surveys may reach more sections of the community than a simple written consultation.
- Think about the capacity of faith organisations. Most are voluntary organisations without full-time staff. Consider allocating financial resources to facilitate consultations.
- Allow enough time. Organisations will need the recommended 12-week consultation period to respond effectively. Do not flood them with consultative material – send relevant papers with clear instructions and flag-up appropriate sections.
- Ensure that women, young people and older people are represented. These groups are traditionally harder to reach in the faith communities. Refer to the good work being done by the Women and Equality Unit in the Department for Trade and Industry and the Children and Young People's Unit in the Department for Education and Skills. Clearly state on consultation that these groups are to be included and ask faith organisations to explain how the groups were reached.

Further advice

The Faith Communities Unit at the Home Office is a central source of advice to Government Departments on a wide range of issues relating to the faith communities in the United Kingdom.

The Inner Cities Religious Council, part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, exists particularly to seek input from faith communities in matters relating to urban regeneration.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK is an independent body which promotes good relations between people of different faiths, and links a wide range of organisations, including faith representative bodies.

Contact details

Faith Communities Unit

Home Office
4th floor, Allington Towers
19 Allington Street
London SW1E 5EB
0870 000 1585
public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Inner Cities Religious Council

Community Participation Branch
Floor 4/J10, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5BU
020 7944 4400
icrc@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Inter Faith Network for the UK

8a Lower Grosvenor Place
London
SW1W 0EN
020 7931 7766
ifnet@interfaith.org.uk

Guidance for faith communities on responding effectively to Government initiatives

i. Introduction

- 3.1.1** It was widely noted by Departments during the Review process that some faith communities tend to respond to consultations more frequently and fully than others.
- 3.1.2** Chapter Two listed some of the possible reasons for poor responses to consultations, and contained detailed advice to Government Departments on what they could do to optimise the conditions for faith communities to respond helpfully to consultations. However, faith communities can also play their part in making consultations a success. The following chapter has been included at the suggestion of faith community representatives involved in the Review, and suggests some approaches that faith communities themselves can adopt to get the most out of their engagement with Government (both in relation to policy and to events and celebrations). It concludes with a short section providing advice for faith communities wishing to organise a national event or celebration.

ii. Advice to faith communities

- 3.2.1** The first section below (paragraphs 3.2.2 to 3.2.17) offers advice to single faith community bodies wishing to engage with Government Departments, whilst the second (paragraphs 3.2.18 to 3.2.20) suggests some productive collective approaches when a number of faith communities are co-operating on an initiative or project with Government. Some of the advice in one section may be equally applicable to the other.

Single faith community bodies

i) Familiarise yourself with Government

- 3.2.2** Deep confusion can exist within the faith communities about who within the Government, and within individual Departments, is responsible for relations with the faith communities or for the development of specific policies. Whilst Government officials are being advised to involve faith communities where appropriate, it is also up to the faith communities to make efforts to get to know officials in Government Departments, not to wait for the Government to beat a path to their doors. Communication should be two-way: if a faith community has a particular concern there is no reason why it should not take the initiative in raising it with Government, preferably in writing. The Home Office Faith Communities Unit can provide advice and contact details for responsible policy officials.

ii) *Be persistent*

3.2.3 If faith communities feel their perspectives are not being adequately taken into account by Government, they should be prepared to keep trying (though it is recognised that it is against the tradition of some faith communities to “force” their views on Government). The responsible officials may have initially underestimated the importance of involving the faith communities. Alternatively, the officials whom faith community bodies have been approaching may not have been the right ones for the matter in hand, in which case advice can be sought from the Faith Communities Unit.

3.2.4 If all else fails, faith communities can write to the responsible Minister. The letter will be passed to the policy officials involved, who will advise the Minister on it. In doing so they would be expected to take advice as necessary, including from the Faith Communities Unit. If appropriate, a meeting can then be arranged or a correspondence process initiated. Letters to Ministers and officials should be brief, clear and to the point.

3.2.5 Even if Departments conclude that a faith perspective is not at the time in question directly relevant to a particular issue, the faith community bodies concerned have a right to expect that Departmental officials will write back, explaining clearly why this is the case. If such a letter has not been received, the faith community body should let the Faith Communities Unit know, as the Unit may be able to help. It has to be recognised, however, that responding to a consultation will not automatically bring about a change in policy: the responsible Department must consider the wider impact of policy change on everyone.

iii) *Speak with a common voice*

3.2.6 Acknowledging that different opinions may exist on any issue within faith communities, a faith community wishing to influence the development or implementation of a policy or event should come to the consultation table with a position that has been negotiated and agreed in advance with as wide as possible a range of traditions and organisations within the community. It is difficult for Departments to be guided by the perspectives of one faith body if another of the same faith, but perhaps from a different tradition, is taking a radically different position. This requires effective communication within and between representative organisations, and adequate empowerment of key individuals.

iv) *Develop appropriate structures*

3.2.7 It is for faith communities, rather than for Government, to decide what kind of representative structures they should or can create, given the diversity of different strands and perspectives within them. However, the “organisational landscape” of a faith community will inevitably affect the way consultations are carried out with it by central Government. The structure of some faith organisations may limit their capacity to be an effective partner in consultations. From the point of view of Government, as from other public bodies and other faith communities, the consultation process is made easier if there is a broadly

based umbrella representative body which truly reflects the different sections of the community and which can draw on relevant expertise within its community.

3.2.8 Features of a representative body which may be used by Government to indicate genuine “reach” into the community include a written constitution, systems to allow ordinary members to influence decisions, and arrangements for involving women and young people. Where an organisation lacks the necessary capacity or resources to constitute itself in this way, or to respond to Government consultations as fully or rapidly as it would wish, it is advised to investigate whether it is possible to make use of resources (e.g. computer access and meeting space) offered by local authorities, non-departmental public bodies and existing local voluntary or, for some communities, Black and Minority Ethnic networks.

3.2.9 Many faith communities already have such umbrella structures. Where a community does not, or where there are significant sections of a community not represented within an umbrella body, the Government and others wishing to consult that community have to decide for themselves what pattern of consultation is the most appropriate one to adopt. In these circumstances Departments need to take account of developments in the representational pattern of a faith community, so as to ensure that its consultative arrangements reflect changes in this, and to satisfy themselves that the organisations which it consults are indeed effective sounding boards for their communities.

3.2.10 The information gathering exercise carried out as part of the Review furnished a substantial quantity of data about representative bodies. The Faith Communities Unit will refer to this data in advising colleagues in other Departments on the most appropriate organisations to approach when undertaking consultations in varying circumstances.

v) *Be clear*

3.2.11 When completing consultation questionnaires, faith community organisations should bear in mind that the responsible officials may have to read, analyse and transcribe a great quantity of returns. In order that their perspectives can be taken into account properly, organisations should:

- Type answers or write clearly
- Answer the actual questions asked
- Indicate where a simple answer is not possible
- Be brief – offer supplementary comments separately (though keep these to a minimum)
- Aim to meet the deadline or, if this is not feasible, negotiate an extension with the Department as early as possible

vi) *Include women, young people and older people*

3.2.12 Some faith communities encourage participation by women, young people and older people in public affairs, whereas others have not done so to the same degree (see paragraphs 2.2.31 to 2.2.34 for a fuller exploration of this issue).

However, the Government is keen to take on board the perspectives of women, young people and older people from all the faith communities in developing and implementing policy.

3.2.13 The onus is on faith community representative bodies to make arrangements for involving women, young people and older people where these do not already exist. (Some umbrella faith organisations with which the Government usually deals do have the necessary arrangements in place.) Departments will expect to see clear evidence that the views of women, young people and older people have been canvassed by faith community organisations responding to consultations. If this is not forthcoming, and no good reason why this has not been possible has been given, Departments are increasingly likely to set the contributions of faith bodies on one side until this evidence is furnished.

3.2.14 Equally, though Departments recognise that this may present cultural difficulties in some cases (e.g. the unwillingness of some practising orthodox Muslim women to attend mixed gatherings), they will wish to see some women and young people of faith attending events and celebrations, and not just the “usual faces”. It will also be expected that a good proportion of individuals nominated to attend - perhaps 30% - should be women, and that where possible there should also be a representation of young people at these events.

vii) *Become involved in local and regional VCS/BME structures and consultations*

3.2.15 There is evidence that in some regions of the United Kingdom, faith community organisations have a poor success rate in applying for funding from the various programmes designed to support Voluntary and Community Sector and Black and Minority Ethnic infrastructure and projects. (It is recognised that Black and Minority Ethnic structures are not relevant to some sections of faith communities.)

3.2.16 This is partly because Departments and regional government structures have not always been aware that faith community bodies are eligible to apply, or have assumed that funding would be used for religious or proselytising activities. Guidance being issued through the present Report (see Chapters Two, Five and Six) is intended to address these misconceptions. Nevertheless, faith organisations should be prepared to be persistent if the initial response to approaches for funding is that faith communities are not eligible.

3.2.17 An onus also rests on faith-based organisations to make sure that they are fully involved in local and regional Voluntary and Community Sector/Black and Minority Ethnic structures and initiatives where appropriate, and that they take part in generalist (i.e. non-faith-specific) consultative exercises undertaken by Departments. By doing so, faith bodies will raise their profiles with officials who service or deal with local and regional Voluntary and Community Sector/Black and Minority Ethnic structures, and may find it easier to access funding (though some faith communities lack a regional structure and may find it difficult to tap into regional funding programmes).

Multi faith co-operation

viii) Generosity of spirit

3.2.18 Where a number of faith communities are co-operating with each other and with Government on a project or initiative, everyone involved should aim to have respect for diversity of opinion, i.e. the likelihood that other members of the group may not share the same positions, beliefs or philosophical assumptions. In order to achieve mutually agreed ends it may be necessary to accept that there may be quite fundamental differences of opinion within the group (e.g. members of the Lambeth Group disagreed over whether National Lottery proceeds should be used to fund Millennium celebrations by religious groups). It is usually possible to work out agreed positions which recognise these differences of opinion, and to make sensitive or multiple recommendations that accommodate them.

ix) Develop a common approach

3.2.19 From the perspective of Government, it is easier to work productively with the faith communities if the different communities speak as far as possible with a common voice (such as the co-operation between faith communities in pressing for a question on religious identity to be included in the 2001 Census). The possibility of faith communities adopting a common approach in their response to Government consultations has been enhanced by the establishment, in early 2003, of the Faith Communities Consultative Forum within the framework of the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom. While the Forum does not seek to speak on behalf of faith communities collectively, it provides a means for faith communities to discuss together matters of mutual concern; to develop a greater understanding of the position being taken by other communities; and, where there is a common view, to build informal coalitions to deal with particular issues.

x) “Something in common”

3.2.20 Successful collaborations involving a number of faith communities in delivering an event or contributing to a policy are usually ones where all the “faith” members have or face at least one of the following:

- Common interests (e.g. local authority plans for an area)
- Common threats (e.g. the BNP)
- Common obstacles (e.g. grant application procedures)

iii. National events and celebrations organised by faith communities

3.3.1 Inter faith groups, voluntary organisations and single faith communities have occasionally organised national celebrations involving people of different faiths. Examples of this kind of event would include a church service celebrating the centenary of a charity, or the Sikh event described in the box below.

- 3.3.2** Sometimes faith community events take place in the Houses of Parliament, for instance annual events to mark Eid and Diwali. Usually individual MPs or Parliamentary interest groups organise or host these, and it should not be assumed that they are Government-sponsored events. It is rare for a Government Department to organise an event inside Parliament - the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment to mark the Millennium was an exception (see paragraph 4.3.16).
- 3.3.3** The Inter Faith Network is always willing to offer advice, if this is required, to a faith community or other body wishing to organise a special event. For instance it can advise on invitations which might be issued to other faith communities, and on the matters of concern which might arise for other communities over the content of the event. The Faith Communities Unit can advise on Government participation, for example if a Minister is being invited to speak at the event. (Participation of Government Ministers and representatives of other faiths in celebrations organised by faith communities is increasingly common and is to be welcomed.) However, faith communities are themselves now much more versed in these issues and may not feel the need of advice.

Example of national event organised by faith community: 300th anniversary of the Sikh Khalsa

On 25 April 1999, the Network of Sikh Organisations organised a national celebration in the Royal Albert Hall, involving more than 5,000 Sikhs and friends from other faiths, in the biggest celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Khalsa held outside India. Among the guests were HRH the Prince of Wales, the Anglican Bishop of London, the Chief Rabbi, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, the President of the National Council of Hindu Temples, the then Home Secretary, the then Leader of the Opposition, and representatives of the Liberal Democrats, the Commission for Racial Equality and a number of Government Departments. It was the first time in this country that royalty, leaders of the main political parties and leaders of other faiths had joined together to show respect to the Sikh community.

The Albert Hall celebration was an important landmark for British Sikhs for several reasons. The event would not have been possible without the active and enthusiastic co-operation of more than a hundred gurdwaras and other Sikh organisations, large and small, throughout Britain. It marked a previously unheard of degree of co-operation between British Sikhs and a realisation of the positive benefits of working together. Equally importantly, the function marked the full and enthusiastic involvement of other faiths and all sections of British life. Sikhism in Britain came of age in Royal Albert Hall on 25 April 1999 in a new found unity and with public recognition of the egalitarian teachings of the Gurus, of tolerance, respect and a commitment to the service to others: values that could and should influence mainstream British life.

Representation of faith communities at national services and celebrations

i. Introduction

- 4.1.1** This chapter provides general advice for Departments planning national events and celebrations, and outlines three types of national service or celebration where it might be desirable for different faith communities to be invited to attend. Some of the general propriety issues that those organising such occasions should bear in mind are also suggested in this section.
- 4.1.2** The chapter concludes with individual sections relating to the Christian Churches and the other historic faith communities linked by the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom: Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Buddhists, Jains, Bahá'ís and Zoroastrians (in order of their respective sizes). These contributions have been contributed by faith representatives on the Working Group and there is considerable diversity in their contents and structure. However, it has not been felt appropriate in this Report to edit them in order to attempt uniformity: in their different ways they all offer valuable background information and helpful perspectives on the differing requirements of the faith communities in relation to national services and celebrations.

ii. General advice to Government Departments

- 4.2.1** A Department intending to organise a national service or celebration involving the presence of people of different faiths should always be clear about what sort of event it wishes to see - the different types are set out in paragraph 4.3.1. It should then consult the faith communities over the nature of the proposed event well in advance. (This necessity goes beyond the usual courtesy of providing senior figures with as much notice as possible if they are to be invited to attend an event.) The faith communities will have a view on whether a celebration should take place at all, not just how to celebrate it, and this requires ample time to be allowed for initial discussions. The nature and extent of faith communities' representation and involvement will depend very much on whether the proposed event is seen by them as a "State" event, i.e. a focus of unity across the United Kingdom, or a "Government" event, i.e. one which is in the realm of political debate and disagreement.
- 4.2.2** The representation and involvement of people of different faiths will also depend on what those invited are being asked to do. Individual communities will have their own perspectives on the parameters within which they can be present at, or

participate in, national events. There is also likely to be considerable diversity of thought and practice within any one community. It is important to distinguish between concerns over what is or is not appropriate in a multi faith context; and those which relate to what might be appropriate in an event taking place at the instigation of Government, and therefore raising questions to do with the relationship between faith communities and the State. The final section of this chapter sets out some useful guidance on these issues offered by individual faith communities.

- 4.2.3** Whether or not the faith communities are willing to support and participate in an event will also depend on timing. The responsible Department should always consult a multi faith calendar (e.g. the Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals), or seek advice from the Home Office Faith Communities Unit, to check that the proposed date of the event does not clash with a festival or holy day of any faith community (which might prevent that community from attending).
- 4.2.4** Departments wishing to invite the faith communities to participate in or attend events in England other than acts of worship are advised to include, as a minimum, Christian (including black Christian), Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and Buddhist representatives. The main Christian Churches in England are listed in footnote 5 on page 42. For larger events, Jain, Bahá'í and Zoroastrian representation is also recommended. When a large gathering is planned where all or a sizeable proportion of the guests are from the faith communities, it is recommended that the faith communities be asked to nominate individuals to receive invitations. In allocating quotas of places, Departments should take some account of the relative sizes of faith communities nationally, taking advice from the Faith Communities Unit and Inter Faith Network as required. A different balance may be appropriate for events in parts of the United Kingdom outside England.
- 4.2.5** Ensuring that a sufficient number of women and young people from the faith communities are present is also likely to be a specific issue for the organising Department. Where faith umbrella organisations are being invited to submit lists of individuals to receive invitations to functions, it may be necessary to set a minimum percentage of women - in the case of the Buckingham Palace Multi Faith Reception for the Golden Jubilee this was set at 30% - and be prepared to argue strongly for this. Departments should be aware, however, that setting this requirement may exclude some important organisations whose senior figures are men. This applies particularly to the smallest faith communities.
- 4.2.6** The advice in paragraphs 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 do **not** apply to acts of worship: see Category A below.

iii. Different types of occasion

- 4.3.1** In agreeing the suitable parameters of an event, a lead Department should be aware of three basic types of occasion that can be organised or initiated by Government: **an act of worship; a faith-based celebration which is not an act of**

worship; and a celebration which is not faith-based but has faith community participation. There is a fourth type, namely a faith-based event which is not organised or initiated by Government. Guidance on the first three types is set out in the following section, and there is a section on the final category at the end of Chapter Three.

A) *An act of worship*

4.3.2 A Government Department may take the view that it is appropriate for an act of worship (i.e. a religious service usually taking place in a church) to be arranged to mark a national occasion of particular significance or gravity. It is important for Departments to be clear whether what is envisaged is a United Kingdom-wide celebration, or one that relates only to England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. The responsibility for arranging and planning either type of service, as an act of Christian worship (see 4.3.12 below), lies with the Christian Churches. Consultation with the Churches should include the question of where in the United Kingdom the service is to be held, as well as when and of what nature.

4.3.3 In the case of a service for the whole of the United Kingdom to be held in England, the ecumenical body through which consultation with the Churches in different parts of the UK should proceed is Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. As the usual hosting church, the Church of England should be contacted at an early stage of planning, usually by means of a formal approach to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the responsible Secretary of State or the Prime Minister. The sponsoring Department should ensure that the Church of Scotland and the ecumenical bodies Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Cytun (Churches Together in Wales) and the Irish Inter Church Meeting, are all kept informed of progress and allowed the opportunity to contribute to planning.

4.3.4 If a United Kingdom-wide service is to be held in Scotland, the Church of Scotland should usually be approached as the hosting Church; for United Kingdom-wide services in Wales or Northern Ireland, the approach should be made respectively to Cytun (Churches Together in Wales) or the Irish Inter Church Meeting⁴, the ecumenical bodies which would respectively lead on planning and determine the appropriate host Church. The Faith Communities Unit can provide appropriate contact details.

4.3.5 If a national service for England only is planned, the Church of England, as the established Church in England, will usually act as the lead Church, and ecumenical consultation will take place through the English ecumenical body Churches Together in England. When a national service for England is planned, the authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will often invite the relevant Christian bodies - respectively, the Church of Scotland (as the national

4 In respect of Northern Ireland, approaches to the Irish Inter Church Meeting should also be copied to the General Secretary of the Northern Ireland Church Leaders Group, which brings together the leaders of the four largest denominations in Northern Ireland: the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, the Church of Ireland (Anglican) Archbishop of Armagh, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Church in Scotland) in consultation with Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Cytun (Churches Together in Wales), and the Irish Inter Church Meeting - to organise similar services in those nations.

- 4.3.6** In planning a service, it is normal practice for Churches to act in close consultation with relevant departments of Government or other organs of state. Churches would usually look to the sponsoring Department to meet any additional costs associated with the service that contribute to its being “national” in character, and Departments should be prepared to allocate the necessary funding. Guidance on precedent in this respect (e.g. the Millennium Church Service for England) can be sought from the Faith Communities Unit.
- 4.3.7** In the case of national services held in England, Church of England premises are generally used, particularly Westminster Abbey or St Paul’s Cathedral. In these cases the lead for planning is generally the relevant authorities of the church concerned, e.g. the Dean and Chapter of St Paul’s Cathedral or of Westminster Abbey, consulting widely. The Churches have developed a very considerable body of practical knowledge over the years, helping them to identify good, and to avoid bad, practice.
- 4.3.8** Whilst the Church of England usually acts as the “host” for national services in England, both in the sense of planning the service and providing the venue for it, it is usual and important that senior ministerial or lay representatives of other Christian denominations should have a prominent role in the service⁵. The authorities of the Church of England venue concerned will usually deal with invitations to representatives of other denominations and to all Christian clergy with an active role in the service.
- 4.3.9** Equally, although the term ‘services’ is used to refer to national acts of prayer and worship expressed in a basically Christian framework, it has become customary and proper for representatives of other faith communities to be invited to such Christian acts of worship. However, for religious reasons adherents of most other faiths find it problematic, if not impossible, to participate in the liturgy of a Christian service. A frequently used and successful formulation for their involvement is that they are “honoured guests” rather than participants. The actions which they might be invited to fill in this role, and conversely the actions which they should not be invited to perform, are set out in the individual sections contributed by the different faith communities to Section (iv) below.
- 4.3.10** Representatives of all eight historic non-Christian faith communities linked by the Inter Faith Network (listed at 4.1.2 above) should be invited to attend national services. Whilst the actual invitations to these individuals would normally be issued by the authorities of the host Church venue, it is proper for the lead Department to advise on suitable names, consulting the faith communities

⁵ In addition to the Church of England the main Christian denominations in England are the Roman Catholic Church; the Free Churches (Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed Church, Salvation Army, Assemblies of God, New Testament Church of God, Congregationalist and Quaker); the Greek, Russian and Oriental Orthodox; the Pentecostal Churches; and Black majority Churches.

concerned and the Inter Faith Network. The Faith Communities Unit is also in a position to advise other Departments on appropriate patterns of representation. In general the sponsoring Department would be responsible for drawing up the rest of the guest-list for the service, i.e. not including faith community representatives, and for issuing invitations.

- 4.3.11** Recent examples of National Services were those held in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast to mark the new Millennium in 2000, and those to commemorate victims of the terrorist incidents in New York and Bali.
- 4.3.12** There has to date been no national service built around an act of prayer or worship of a faith other than Christianity. Most members of all faith communities recognise that Christianity has a particular pre-eminence in the history, culture and spirituality of Britain, and regard it as entirely appropriate that national acts of worship should be Christian in content. It is unlikely that a minority faith would ever expect, or agree, to organise a national service at the request of Government.
- 4.3.13** Moreover there has been no “multi faith” national service, i.e. one incorporating worship elements from all participating faiths. It is clear that an attempt to organise such a ‘service’ would raise extremely difficult theological issues for all of the faith communities. Members of most faith communities would hold strong reservations about taking part, as they would feel that it was difficult for them to demonstrate their commitment to their own faith with integrity in such a setting. Departments are strongly discouraged from going down this route.

B) *A faith-based celebration which is not an act of worship*

- 4.3.14** A Department may choose to organise a celebratory occasion which has an explicit religious dimension and involves representatives of many faith communities, but does not take the form of an act of worship. Such an event might be held in a secular setting, or in certain circumstances in a place of worship. Celebrations of this type would involve a succession of contributions from different faith communities, each offered in their own integrity.
- 4.3.15** Since there has to date been only one Government organised celebration of this type (described in the following paragraphs), the planning responsibility for such a celebration is less clearly established than for national services, and will largely depend on the nature and purpose of the event envisaged. It is in all circumstances important that the expertise and consent of all faith communities be sought at an early stage, and that there is clarity about what is proposed, why it is important for the faith communities to be involved, and how the event is to be structured.
- 4.3.16** A highly successful Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities of the UK took place on 3 January 2000, to mark the turn of the Millennium. This was hosted by the Government, and organised by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport with the assistance of the Inter Faith Network. The nine main faith communities all took part in the event, which

featured a succession of representatives from different faiths giving readings and musical contributions from their different traditions. Religious leaders then led the recitation of an Act of Commitment. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Prime Minister and Culture Secretary attended along with other dignitaries.

4.3.17 Contributions to the event were scripted and developed in discussion between the Inter Faith Network and participants over a period of three months leading up to the event, through the preparation of a series of drafts. This indicates the time commitment which careful preparation of an event of this kind requires. The event was held in a secular building (the Houses of Parliament), albeit one which strongly expressed the significance of the event as a celebration of a religiously diverse but inclusive society. All the participants from faith communities felt that the occasion provided them with an opportunity to present key values of their faith confidently, honestly and sensitively; in a way which avoided confusion and ambiguity; and in a context which was not an act of worship.

4.3.18 Similar events may be arranged in the future, in which case the careful processes of consultation which were established involving Government, the Inter Faith Network and faith community representatives would provide a valuable precedent. However, as an event hosted by Government, it may well remain unique for some time to come.

C) *A celebration which is not faith-based (but has faith community participation)*

4.3.19 A Department may want to organise a national celebration which is not religious in character, but to which it is deemed appropriate to invite representatives of the faith communities. A recent example was a major reception for 750 members of the faith communities, held at Buckingham Palace in June 2002 to mark the Golden Jubilee.

4.3.20 Whilst such an event might be more straightforward to organise, there are issues surrounding the pattern of invitations to be issued to representatives of faith communities. Some guidance is given in paragraphs 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 above, but in major events of this kind it is always important to ensure that careful arrangements are put in place for consulting faith communities on the pattern of invitations to be issued and the mechanics of securing nominations. In the case of events where there are only a small number of faith community representatives, any consultation will no doubt be more informal.

4.3.21 In the past, Departments would sometimes invite Christian clergy to attend civic and state functions, but neglect to include non-Christian faith leaders. It is also possible that Departments would not remember to invite representatives of the Christian Churches alongside individuals representing other faiths. Moreover Departments can be confused between religious leaders and secular ones (though there will usually be a mixture of both at events where the faith communities themselves have been asked for nominations). The Faith Communities Unit and the Inter Faith Network can provide advice on how to avoid these pitfalls.

D) Faith-based events not organised or initiated by Government

4.3.22 Events which are organised by an individual faith community or by a national inter faith organisation or voluntary organisation do not fall within the purview of this Review. Nevertheless organisers within faith communities may wish to take account of the advice included in paragraphs 3.3.1 to 3.3.3 in Chapter Three.

iv. Contact details

Home Office Faith Communities Unit

4th floor, Allington Towers
19 Allington Street
London SW1E 5EB
0870 000 1585
public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Inter Faith Network for the UK

8A Lower Grosvenor Place
London
SW1W 0EN
020 7931 7766
ifnet@interfaith.org.uk

v. Faith communities' perspectives

The following material has been helpfully prepared by representatives of different faith communities. As a result there are some differences in format and coverage.

A Bahá'í perspective

There have been Bahá'ís in the United Kingdom since the end of the nineteenth century, and the National Spiritual Assembly, the national governing council of the community, has been continuously in existence since 1923.



The Bahá'í teachings explicitly recognise the validity of the fundamental truths of all the great faith traditions, and see them as emanating from a single divine source. Bahá'ís believe truth to be equally accessible to all of humanity and respect the freedom of people of the different faiths to worship and practice in their diverse ways. Bahá'í teachings encourage Bahá'ís to 'consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship'.

Bahá'í community structure and practice

The Bahá'í Faith has no priests or ministers and no concept of ordination. The Bahá'í community is governed by annually elected nine-member councils at local and national levels. The authority of these councils, known as Local Spiritual Assemblies and the

National Spiritual Assembly, is corporate: no member has individual authority and there are no individual 'religious leaders'. The leadership of the Bahá'í community is exercised by these Assemblies, which are sacred institutions for the Bahá'í community. The authority of the Assemblies is accepted by all Bahá'ís – it is a condition of membership of the Bahá'í community to do so.

Representation of the Bahá'í community

It is correct to approach the National Spiritual Assembly with requests for formal representation of the Bahá'í community at national events. The National Assembly will appoint one of its members (often its Secretary) or another individual to act in this capacity. Individual Bahá'ís who are not appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly are free to attend, but they should not be considered as official representatives of the Bahá'í community.

Bahá'í participation

Bahá'ís welcome invitations to attend Christian or other acts of worship as 'honoured guests' and have no objection to being asked to join in processions or in simple acts, such as lighting of candles or repeating affirmations that are broadly inclusive and which are compatible with Bahá'í beliefs. Bahá'ís would not, of course, join in reciting the Christian Creed or in forms of worship in any faith that would indicate adherence to that faith or assent to doctrine incompatible with the Bahá'í teachings.

Bahá'ís are equally happy to participate actively in appropriately planned and designed faith-based celebrations which are not acts of worship or in non-faith-based celebrations. Such celebrations should show equal respect for all faiths and the representatives of the faiths.

Bahá'í worship

Bahá'í worship is essentially very simple. Bahá'ís worship God, using prayers and readings revealed by the three Central Figures of the faith: Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith; his Forerunner, the Báb; and his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There is no set form of worship and no liturgy or ritual. In formal gatherings the programme of readings and the readers - who can be anybody, Bahá'í or otherwise - will usually be chosen by the organisers (often a Bahá'í Assembly); if the setting is more informal, prayer and readings may be chosen by readers. The prayers and readings may be interspersed with live or recorded music.

Bahá'í devotional gatherings are open to all, whether Bahá'í or not. Bahá'ís are also very happy to organise, alone or in partnership with others, multi faith celebrations and devotional programmes where equal weight is given to devotional material from all faiths.

Bahá'í premises

There is no Bahá'í House of Worship in the UK, but there is a national Bahá'í Centre in London as well as a number of local Bahá'í Centres around the country. None of the Bahá'í properties in the UK are large enough to accommodate more than 50 people at the most. For the most part, Bahá'í meetings take place in hired premises or in Bahá'í homes. Larger gatherings, including devotional gatherings, will invariably take place in hired auditoria or halls, usually in non-religious buildings.

Diversity & equality

The National Assembly is always keen to encourage participation by all elements of the ethnically diverse Bahá'í community, by people of all ages, and by both women and men.

A Buddhist perspective



Background

Buddhists follow the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as 'The Buddha' or 'The Enlightened One', who lived in India 2,500 years ago. Buddhist teachings do not include the concept of a God as a creator-being. The Buddha himself is not perceived as a God but his teachings are held in high respect and are treasured with gratitude.

History

The last 100 years have seen an increasing number of Buddhists living and practising in the West. Throughout its long history, Buddhism has acquired many of the cultural characteristics of the host societies in which it has flourished, stretching from Sri Lanka to Tibet, to South East Asia, China and Japan. More recently, in coming to the West, it has undergone further changes under the influence of modern Western culture.

In the UK at present, approximately half the Buddhists come from minority ethnic backgrounds, notably the Chinese. Among the ethnic British Buddhist population are to be found followers of both ancient Buddhist traditions and new Western foundations.

Core Teachings

The core teachings of Buddhism rest on the principles of Wisdom and Compassion. Wisdom is understood to mean a true perception of the nature of phenomena, including, of course, mankind. As Wisdom arises, Compassion and Morality also arise as understanding develops of the way in which all things are connected. Buddhist training is three-fold and includes training in morality, mental development and wisdom.

The teachings of the Buddha can be likened to the work of a doctor in identifying and treating illness and suffering. In the Four Noble Truths, he identified the causes of suffering in the human condition and described the path that should be followed by those who wish to relieve the suffering of themselves and others.

Buddhist Worship

There is an enormous range of liturgical practice to be found among the different Buddhist groups operating in the UK. Chanting and the recitation of the Buddhist scriptures (known as the Sutras) may take place either in a modern language, including English, or in one of the ancient traditional languages, Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese. Many traditions place great emphasis on the practice of silent meditation. Buddhist places of worship may be elaborately and sumptuously decorated, while others may be notable for their bare simplicity.

On entering a place of worship, the shoes are usually removed. It is customary to make a bow towards the altar with the palms of the hands pressed together. A similar gesture is often used as a form of greeting for other Buddhists. In some traditions, it is also customary to make prostrations to the altar, the precise style of which varies between traditions.

Participation

Buddhists are pleased to be invited to participate in national services and celebrations. Whilst it would not be appropriate for a Buddhist to be asked to affirm allegiance to any God-figure, or to recite anything resembling the Christian Creed, participation in processions, the lighting of candles, readings, and the offering of general benedictions and thanksgivings would all be highly appropriate. Buddhists recognise the integrity of the Faiths practised by other people and seek to develop harmony and mutual understanding between people of different backgrounds and beliefs.

Certain kinds of conduct and livelihoods are considered by Buddhists to be wrong and unskilful, and to be avoided. This includes the waging of war. Buddhists would therefore have strong reservations about participating in any celebrations that could be seen as endorsing or celebrating warfare.

Diet

To avoid harming animals many Buddhists espouse vegetarianism or veganism. Many will not take alcohol but that is not true for all Buddhists.

A Christian perspective



The following section outlines some key Christian theological and liturgical attitudes to these questions. There will be some diversity of opinion among Christians as to how these principles are applied, though this does not necessarily align with denominational allegiance.

It is important to recognise that all the types of occasion listed above can raise theological and liturgical questions for Christians. These fall into three categories:

- what is or is not appropriate within a Christian act of worship;
- what is or is not appropriate on Christian premises;
- Christian participation in celebrations.

Christian worship

Christian prayer and worship is directed to God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. Christians believe that all people are invited to share in the relationship which makes this possible, and Christian services are essentially public in character. It is common in many Christian traditions to give a special place of recognition on major occasions of Christian worship to representative figures of the wider community; in the contemporary United Kingdom, this naturally includes welcoming leaders of other faith communities.

In such circumstances, care needs to be taken to ensure that these individuals are not expected to behave in ways which are incompatible with, or inappropriate to, their own faith, e.g. through being themselves expected to join in affirmations of the Christian Creed, or read from Christian scripture, or sing Christological or Trinitarian hymns. It is also recognised by those responsible for the planning of services that care and sensitivity needs to be exercised in choosing suitable liturgical material which will not cause gratuitous offence to, or unnecessary difficulties for, guests from other faith communities. The Christian churches have over the years built up a substantial body of expertise in these areas.

If representatives of other faiths are being asked not only to be present but to take an active participatory role in Christian services, it is important that this be done so as to ensure:

- the integrity of the whole service as an act of Christian worship;
- that the Christian content of the service is not deliberately minimised or downplayed;
- no elements hostile or contrary to Christian faith are included.

It also needs to be remembered that, even in national services, Christian worship is the liturgical expression of an international community of faith. Christian leaders in this country will therefore rightly have a particular concern for the way in which high-profile services are reported to and perceived by the Church overseas.

Events in Christian churches

Both attitudes and practice vary considerably within the Christian churches as to what events are appropriate or permissible within church buildings. Some of this variation reflects differences in opinion over the theological significance of such buildings - for example, over the meaning, if any, attached to the idea of 'consecration'. The following two paragraphs give a broad outline of legal constraints and pastoral practice in the particular context of the Church of England, but detailed questions relating to the appropriateness of specific events should be discussed at an early stage with the authorities of the venue concerned. As noted above, national services are usually held in Church of England premises; if buildings of other churches are to be used, the relevant authorities of that Church should likewise be consulted well in advance of the event.

Worship and other events held in a Church of England place of worship are governed by Canon Law. A consecrated building is set apart for worship according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England for ever. Canon B4 allows for the approval of forms of service in the Church of England for occasions for which no provision is made in the Book of Common Prayer or by the General Synod. Such services must satisfy the requirement that they "in words and order are reverent and seemly and are neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential manner". More generally, under ecclesiastical law the use of church buildings must reflect the fact that they have been consecrated for purposes (including worship) consistent with the doctrine of the Church of England.

In practice, representatives of other faith communities have regularly been welcomed as honoured guests at national services held in Church of England churches, and have often been specifically invited to enter in procession and sit prominently in such services, as a visible affirmation of the importance of their presence. On occasions, they have joined publicly in simple liturgical actions - such as the lighting of candles - within an overall Christian liturgical framework. With a few exceptions, they have not preached, read from their scriptures, or offered prayer according to the patterns of their respective faiths. (It should be noted, however, that Jews and Christians both accept, and use in worship, the Hebrew Scriptures).

Christian participation

On occasions which seek to involve community representatives of the Christian faith, it is important to remember the ethnic and cultural variety of the Churches in this country (and also to different degrees of some of the other faith communities), and to ensure that women and young people are adequately represented.

At national events, the ecumenical diversity of Christianity should be adequately represented. Helpful practical advice on making this happen can be obtained from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland or from Churches Together in England, depending on whether the event is designed for the United Kingdom or for England only. Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Cytun (Churches Together in Wales) and the Irish Inter Church Meeting can offer advice for events in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.

A Hindu perspective



Hindu Temple Services

The source scripture of the Hindu faith is the Vedas and one of the main holy books is the Bhagvad Gita, which in the modern day is the most authoritative and widely used Hindu book. The Hindu Dharma allows individuals to worship different gods: whilst there is only one supreme God, Brahm, that is inexplicable, indescribable and formless, there are different paths to reach him. The different gods are divine manifestations or incarnations of the same one God.

All Hindu temples (140 in the United Kingdom) extend a welcome to people of other faiths at all times. Visitors are requested to remove their shoes before entering the main temple area or prayer hall. On entering the temple the devotees will ring a bell, the sound of AUM. The sound of AUM (Hindus believe this to be the sound of the creation of the universe) is the shortest of all sacred prayers and as symbolic to Hinduism as the Cross is to Christianity and the Star of David to Judaism. The devotees bow to the deities and offer fruits and flowers to the gods. It is also customary for them to put money in the donation boxes.

There are three main services conducted by a priest during the day, in the morning, lunch time and evening. It is not obligatory to attend these services and individuals pray at home or do both. Visitors can take as much or as little an active part as they wish. In temples in Britain, both males and females are expected to sit on the floor, though provision is made for the elderly or infirm to sit on chairs. At major functions men and women sit separately. However, when families go to the temple together they may sit together.

The language of worship in temples can be Gujarati, Punjabi or Telegu, depending on the majority living locally. Talks on Hinduism are given to visitors from schools or other organisations who wish to learn about the faith. In most temples these are given by volunteers. Information on temples and other resource materials can be obtained from Hindu umbrella bodies.

In all temples Prasad (food) is on offer at all times. This could be fresh or dried fruit, sweets or other offerings brought by the devotees. Most temples organise a collective prayer meeting once a month where the donated food, cooked by volunteers, is shared. The purpose of this meeting is to unite the families/community and sing praise of God. The sharing of food with everybody is an important custom of Hindu life.

Hindu Religious Festivals

The UK's 700,000 Hindus celebrate four major religious festivals during the year. These are Ramnavami (Birth of Lord Rama), Janmastami (Birth of Lord Krishna), Navaratri (Nine Night's devotion to Shakti, the Goddess of Strength) and Diwali (New Year). There are several other festivals including Dusheshra, Holi and Rakhi. All these dates are set according to the lunar calendar, and do not fall on the same day each year. It is

important to note that during these festivals, members of Hindu organisations are engaged in activities and would have difficulty attending any major national functions.

Hindus and inter faith Dialogue

The development of inter faith understanding is not only welcome to Hindus, but is an essential teaching of the Hindu scripture which demands tolerance and respect for other religions of the world. India is a country where Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and others have coexisted for thousands of years.

Dietary requirements

Certain sectors of the Hindu community are pure vegetarians and will not eat anything not prepared within the Hindu tradition. Eating beef is forbidden for Hindus. The cow is regarded as a sacred animal. Hindus do eat meat, but at special festivals involving fasting they will refrain for religious reasons. Special note should be made that when vegetarian diets are requested, this should not include eggs or fish. Vegetarian food should not be served on the same platters as food containing meat, eggs or fish. (It is often the case that at events, all sandwiches are together on one tray, some containing eggs, fish or meat. Information needs to be given to caterers supplying food in order to avoid this.)

Interfaith Functions/ Celebrations/Services

Hindus will readily join in local and national events involving other faiths. Clearly there is some difficulty (not insurmountable) if the event involves prayers, rituals specific to other faiths, or references to exclusive prophets or final revelations, but most Hindus feel that this is more than outweighed by the gain in inter religious co-operation. In such circumstances, Hindus would consider themselves as guests rather than full participants. Most Hindus will be comfortable in joining in prayers addressed directly to the Supreme Being, who may be referred to as God, Allah, and Ram or by other names.

A Jain perspective

Jainism is an Indian faith followed by several million people in India and by sizeable numbers of migrant Jains in Europe, East Africa and North America. Only in the past two centuries have Jains spread beyond India in any significant numbers. Most of the more than 25,000 Jains in Britain, over 2,500 in Belgium, about 200 each in France, Germany and Switzerland and a few scattered in other countries of Europe have settled since 1945.



Jains have traditionally formed a merchant and financial community in India and today most British Jains are in business or the professions. Many Jains have maintained their centuries-old role as India's gem traders to take a prominent part in the modern world-wide diamond trade. The Jain community is relatively wealthy and philanthropic, is religious, non-violent, tolerant, law-abiding and philanthropic, and maintains open and cordial relations with people of other communities and faiths.

The Jain way of life is regulated mainly by non-violence and reverence for all life in action and relative pluralism in thoughts. The meaning of life for them is spiritual liberation by self-effort and they lead an ethical, 'non-violent' life to attain this. By observing the austerities they shed karma attached to their souls. Their motto is to 'live and help to live'; hence they live a simple life and promote extensive philanthropic activity, encompassing care for the poor, the homeless, the sick, educational work, animal welfare, and care for the places of worship and spirituality. Jain ethics are relevant to contemporary concerns such as the care of nature, care of the environment, the reduction of conflict and the promotion of tolerance and peace. Jains avoid professions which involve harm to living beings, such as the meat trade, and they are vegetarians. They do not proselytise, but accept any person who follows the Jain way of life as a member of the Jain community. As a result many of their great saints, whom they adore, have emerged from the non-Jain communities.

Jains aspire to be 'spiritual victors' and revere twenty-four past 'enlightened ones', known as tirthankaras, who show the way to spiritual liberation. Jainism is very ancient, dating back long before the time of Mahavira, probably to the Indus Valley civilisation (2,500 BCE) or beyond. The first tirthankara in this descending cycle was Risabhdeva, who is traditionally believed to have lived thousands of centuries ago, the twenty-third was Parsvanatha (c.870 BCE to 770 BCE) and the twenty-fourth (and last) was Vardhamana Mahavira who lived from 599 to 527 BCE and was a contemporary of the Buddha. Mahavira's teachings, including the establishment of the fourfold order of Jain society (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen), have formed the basis of Jainism and Jain way of life for over 2,500 years.

The religious leadership of the Jain community is vested in male and female ascetics, generally referred to in English as monks and nuns. Jain ascetics renounce all attachment to worldly things, owning nothing and severing all ties of family and sentiment, to seek spiritual enlightenment. They are held in very high regard by Jains and non-Jains alike. Because of their vow of strict non-violence, they will travel only by walking; monks and nuns rarely go abroad.

Jain culture appears similar to that of the Hindus, while its philosophical tradition is clearly of the same stream of thought as Buddhism. Over thousands of years Jain philosophers and scholars have contributed to learning in science, mathematics and logic, as well as in cosmology, philosophy and religion.

One of the most striking contributions of Jains to human achievement is in art and architecture. Jain temples, some of which are virtual 'temple cities', are among the most beautiful buildings ever constructed. The first Jain Temple in the world, which brings together in one building all the main sects of Jains, is in Leicester. This magnificent building has been created in traditional Jain style, with rich interior stone carvings and a striking marble frontage, and is a major tourist attraction, which welcomes visitors. It has been visited by many dignitaries, including the former Prime Minister and a member of the Royal Family.

Jains observe festivals, which are mostly spiritual in nature such as the paryushana (sacred days of fasting and forgiveness), and usually the festivals are concluded with

festivities. Their temple rituals are devotional, colourful and musical in nature; the rituals may be individual or collective. They worship tirthankaras as an example, not for asking any favours. Practically every Jain home has a temple, and their worship is devotional, penitential and meditative in nature, and for the peace and welfare of all living beings. They practise equality for all in the worship and spirituality; and all receive the same opportunities without any discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, age or colour. Jains take an active part in inter faith activities and organisations.

Because of their teaching of pluralism, Jains have no problem with joining a national service for celebration, remembrance or condolence where hymns for the prophets of other faiths are sung, and stories relating to quality of life, care of humanity and the natural world are narrated. Jains have attended many Christian services at Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral and in local churches, and have found nothing objectionable.

A Jewish perspective



General comments

We welcome the Government's review of relations with faith communities and their representation at national events. The importance of such events cannot be sufficiently emphasised. They are an expression of our collective identity as a nation. They are an embodiment of the fact - ever more tenuous and in need of strengthening - that whatever our faith, culture, history, background, sacred rituals and texts, we share a commitment to England and to Britain. We are proud to be its citizens. We identify fully with its hopes, prayers, griefs and celebrations. At such events a two-way gesture takes place: Britain shows that its faith communities are important to its collective life, while the communities in turn show that Britain and the responsibilities of citizenship are important to them.

We recognise the dignity and centrality of the Church of England as the established church, and Christianity itself as a formative influence on Britain's past and its dominant faith in the present. We believe that the Church of England has exercised its role with tolerance and wisdom: all the more important as the religious complexion of British society has grown more complex and fragmented. We would not wish to see its primacy in any way diminished. To the contrary, we believe that the role of the Church of England as, in effect, the host of such national events lends them religious dignity and depth as well as graciousness and civility.

We cherish, as the British Jewish community, the good relationships we have with the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, other Christian denominations, and the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian and Bahá'í communities. National events have helped strengthen those relationships. So too have the several inter faith organisations and initiatives. One of the incidental benefits of the current system is that it brings leaders of the faiths together at moments of national or international significance, and this helps to strengthen the bonds of friendship between them under the overarching canopy of celebration, commemoration and prayer.

From a Jewish perspective, those who attend such occasions do so as loyal citizens of Britain, sharing a concern for the universals of the human condition - our hopes for peace, justice, compassion, the sanctity of human life, the dignity of the human person, and our collective responsibility for shaping a society and world in which such values prevail. We also seek to honour those who have worked and fought for these ideals, and to cherish the memory of those who have died in their defence.

We recognise that we may arrive at these ideals from different starting points, base them on different sacred texts, and celebrate them in different rituals. But they are values we share, and we recognise that they should be celebrated in the way deemed appropriate by the Head of State, the Government, or the Church of England.

Different types of occasion

An act of worship: The arrangements that have been made hitherto have been highly successful and should not be changed. Normally the Chief Rabbi or his representative attends as an “honoured guest” and is seated with the representatives of other faiths. He wears formal rabbinic dress and does not normally participate in the service. (The exception was the 50th anniversary of D-Day, which was held not in a Church but in the open air. On that occasion, special arrangements were made with the Secretary of State for Defence to enable the Chief Rabbi to participate.) Often it may also be appropriate for a religious representative from the non-Orthodox tradition within the Jewish community, such as the second Jewish President of the Council of Christians and Jews, also to be invited as an “honoured guest”, alongside other religious leaders. Other Jewish representatives are normally seated together with the congregation.

A faith-based celebration which is not an act of worship: The appropriate model here is the Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment on 3 January 2000. The success of that occasion was due to the facts that (a) it was not an act of worship, (b) it was not held in a place of worship, (c) each of the faith communities was given a voice and a presence. The consensus among the faith communities was that it should become the model for other such occasions in the future.

A celebration which is not faith-based but which has faith participation: Advice should be sought from the Board of Deputies of British Jews (the lay representational body of British Jewry). Demographic strength should not be the only factor determining the representation of the various groups. A sense of history and of contribution to national life should also inform decision-making.

Single faith community events: Many synagogues hold an Annual Civic Service, at which local civic dignitaries and other faith leaders are invited to attend. These services are intended to express the commitment of the local Jewish community to the community at large.

It is exceptionally important for Government to recognise that Britain has a distinctive history of religious tolerance, based not on abstractions such as rights or demography, but on relationships, traditions, history and evolution. Because of this it has avoided many of the pitfalls that abound in this difficult area. We would urge it to continue along this path.

A Muslim perspective



The following section outlines some key Muslim beliefs and then goes on to state some general boundaries of what may or may not be acceptable to persons participating in ceremonies or national services held at Christian places of worship. There may be some diversity of opinion among the different Muslim denominations but these would be fairly minor.

Key Muslim Beliefs

Muslims believe in Allah - the One, Unique, Incomparable, Merciful God – the sole Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. They believe in the Angels created by Him, and in the Prophets through whom His revelations were brought to humans - His vice-regents on Earth. Muslims believe in the Day of Judgement, in individual accountability for actions, in God’s complete authority over destiny, be it good or bad, and in life after death. God sent His messengers and prophets to all people, and God’s final message to humanity, a reconfirmation of the eternal message and a summing up of all that had been sent before, was revealed to the Last Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon him) through the Archangel Gabriel. This is the Qur’an.

Muslims, along with Christians and Jews, trace their origins to the Prophet and Patriarch Abraham: Muhammed through Abraham’s older son Ismael, and Moses and Jesus through Isaac (peace be upon them all). Neither Muhammed nor Jesus (peace be upon them) came to change the basis doctrine of the belief in One God, brought by earlier prophets, but to confirm and renew it. The Qur’an confirms the virgin birth in “Mary”, a special chapter in honour of the mother of Jesus (peace be upon him), and records that during his prophetic mission Jesus (peace be upon him) performed many miracles. Whilst Muslims particularly respect and revere Jesus (peace be upon him), they do not agree with calling him the Son or with any other Trinitarian symbols or actions.

Each human being has been provided guidance and is responsible for his or her own actions and chosen path. Even though great respect is paid to eminent scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence, there is no concept of priesthood and therefore no generally accepted hierarchical system of religious authority within Islam. No actual distinction is made between political leadership and religious leadership.

Muslim congregations in mosques are welcoming to interested observers; requiring only that they be modestly covered, remove their outdoor shoes, and that ladies cover their heads.

Muslim participation in different types of occasion

Muslim leaders are happy to join national services arranged by the Church of England. It is recognised that there may be a slight difficulty in identifying clearly who should be invited as the “religious leader”, since there is no single religious authority. The past practice of inviting Muslim community leaders has been well arranged by the Church of England, and is valued by British Muslims. They welcome the principle of inclusiveness,

and feel no barriers at attending a church service as guests. Recent participation of Muslim faith leaders in Christian services has affirmed that Church leaders have a lot of experience of conducting these ceremonies with great sensitivity and thought.

An act of worship

Muslims would feel happy to be observers but would not wish to read from Christian scripture, or sing Trinitarian hymns, or participate in any acts that would be contrary to their faith (for example the Eucharist).

Within church premises they could sit or stand up when the ceremony requires them to do so (for example for the praise or the reading of the Gospels), but they would not wish to kneel at any point. Bowing to anything or bowing to any person while in the church premises would be inappropriate for Muslims.

A faith-based celebration that is not an act of worship

This would allow greater participation by faith leaders, allowing perhaps each faith to contribute from its particular tradition, as appropriate to the occasion. Muslims would feel comfortable in participating fully in any prayers or text that were not directly contrary to their beliefs.

A celebration that is not faith-based but which has faith participation

In this case since the celebration itself is not faith-based but secular in nature, it is a matter of great significance and pride to the Muslim community that they are identified and recognised as a faith group. This is because they identify themselves first and foremost as Muslims even though they come from many different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. The presence of a large number of different ethnic groups within the Muslim community in Britain requires that the umbrella organisation(s) representing them are consulted and that the community be allocated a quota of places that is proportionate to the relative numerical strength nationally. This allows the different ethnic groups within the Muslim community, and women, youth and the aged to be represented at national events without any particular group feeling excluded.

Single faith community events

There have been no Muslim events held on a large national scale yet. With the Muslim community becoming more established and better able to communicate, there have been a number of initiatives by mosque committees at a local level to invite their neighbours and form links. An 'Open Day at the Mosque' was held throughout Britain for the first time in 2003. It is hoped that better publicity and a greater frequency of these events in future will help in furthering inter faith dialogue and understanding.

A Sikh perspective



Gurdwara Services

All Sikh gurdwaras extend a welcome to people of other faiths at all times. Visitors are requested to remove their shoes and cover their heads before entering the main prayer hall (head coverings are available in most gurdwaras).

The Sikh holy scripture (the Guru Granth Sahib) is placed on a raised dais, covered with a canopy, at one end of the prayer hall. Sikhs, on entering the prayer hall, walk up to and bow before the holy Granth, to show respect for its teachings, before sitting on the carpeted floor to listen to the service. In Britain, it has become customary for men to sit on one side of the hall, and women on the other side. This segregation is by no means rigid, and is not common in India, where families generally sit together.

Services frequently extend over a few hours with worshippers coming and going as they wish. Visitors can take as much or as little an active part as they wish. Worship is of one God. Sikhs do not believe in the need for any intermediary. If a visitor feels that their integrity is compromised by bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib, they are free to go directly to the place they wish to sit in the body of the hall.

The language of worship is mainly Punjabi, but increasingly English is also used to explain Sikh teachings to those whose main language is English. Talks about Sikh teachings or events in Sikh history, or on current concerns of the community, may be given toward the end of the service, when visitors who wish to do so may also address the congregation.

Toward the end of the service a sweet called kara prashad, made from semolina, butter and sugar is distributed to the congregation, and is received with cupped hands. This does not carry the same significance as the Christian Communion but simply serves as a simple reminder that those present, whatever their religious or social background, are equal in the sight of God. The same principle is central to the eating of langar at the end of the service, where people from different social, religious or cultural backgrounds share a simple vegetarian meal.

Sikhs and inter faith dialogue

The development of inter faith understanding is not only welcome to Sikhs but also a requirement following from Sikh teachings. Guru Nanak frequently entered into dialogue with Hindus and Muslims, and verses of Hindu and Muslim saints are included in the Sikh Holy Granth to show respect for the beliefs of others.

Dietary requirements

Some Sikhs are vegetarians; others will not eat beef. Halal/kosher foods are unacceptable.

Interfaith Functions/ Celebrations/Services

Sikhs will readily join in local and national events involving other faiths. Clearly there is some difficulty if the event involves prayers, rituals specific to other faiths, or references to exclusive prophets or final revelations, but most Sikhs feel that this is more than outweighed by the gain in inter religious co-operation. In such circumstances, Sikhs would consider themselves as guests rather than full participants. Most Sikhs will be comfortable in joining in prayers addressed directly to the Supreme Being, who may be referred to as God, Allah, Ram or by other names.

A Zoroastrian perspective



Zoroastrian religious services

The Zoroastrian community does not as yet have a consecrated Fire Temple in the UK. Zoroastrian Services are performed either at the Zoroastrian House, 88 Compayne Gardens, London or at the Zoroastrian Centre, 440 Alexandra Avenue, Harrow. Certain services are also performed in public places. A few Zoroastrian services of a high religious and consecrated nature are not open to non-Zoroastrians. Otherwise most services of a regular nature and those which involve Blessings or Thanksgiving are open to all. Those attending need to cover their heads and to show respect to the Holy Fire which is lit during the service. Smoking is absolutely prohibited during a Zoroastrian Service and on Zoroastrian premises.

Prayers are recited by Zoroastrian priests in the ancient Iranian languages of Avestan, Pahlavi or Pazand. Members of the congregation may pray silently or may listen to the prayers chanted by the priests. On public occasions, a priest usually explains the gist of the prayer in English for the benefit of the guests.

On certain religious occasions, a communal meal is partaken after the service. This has the significance of the community and guests sharing a simple meal irrespective of their status or background.

Zoroastrians and inter faith dialogue

Zoroastrians value inter faith dialogue and participation. The teachings of Zarathushtra underline the importance of equality of all and respect for all faiths. Zoroastrians are intensely loyal to the country they live in and deem it a privilege to be engaged in dialogue with other religions and traditions.

National celebrations and services

For events held in public places, Zoroastrians can provide representation by deputing community leaders or senior priests. Recitation of simple Zoroastrian prayers invoking blessings or thanksgiving in a public place is perfectly acceptable. A reading from scriptures or a statement or affirmation is also perfectly in order.

For events held in Christian Churches or places of worship, the present system of faith leaders being invited as “honoured guests” and of being taken in procession is very appropriate. In such circumstances, Zoroastrian leaders will participate in their traditional dress or robes and can even recite simple prayers invoking blessings or thanksgiving, or participate by means of a reading or lighting a fire or a candle, or by means of an affirmation.

The Zoroastrian community is the smallest faith community in the United Kingdom and therefore requests that rigid quotas for representation based on regions or on gender be waived in its case. Zoroastrians feel very honoured to be invited to participate in major national events.

Local and regional consultations by central government

i. Introduction

- 5.1.1** Chapter Two of this report looked at how central Government Departments can effectively consult with faith communities on a national scale. However, many Government policies, such as those in support of community cohesion, are delivered regionally and locally. For some time Departments have therefore also sought to work with faith communities at these levels to implement policy.
- 5.1.2** Moreover there is a growing recognition within Government, particularly in largely operational departments such as Inland Revenue and the Department for Trade and Industry, that there are considerable local and regional variations in the profile of local faith communities, their needs and the extent to which these are or are not being met. Awareness is therefore growing of the value of consulting faith communities locally and regionally during the process of policy development. For instance, JobCentre Plus offices need to tailor their services to meet the needs of local communities; Local Education Authorities need to work with faith representatives on local Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education to set RE curricula; and all Departments may want to ensure that they secure high-quality local nominations for Honours and appointments to public bodies from the faith communities.
- 5.1.3** National faith representative bodies may in some cases not have the necessary degree of local knowledge to provide Departments with the input they need, whereas local faith bodies (whether places of worship or representative organisations) can offer valuable local experience and expertise in delivering services, as well as resources such as buildings and networks of local contacts. Contact details for single faith community organisations, including places of worship, may be obtained from faith umbrella bodies. The Faith Communities Unit can advise on which bodies to approach for help.
- 5.1.4** This chapter looks at recent developments, issues to consider and examples of good practice; then goes on to make some recommendations to Departments on what approaches they can take to maximise the quantity and quality of input they receive from faith communities locally and regionally. It concludes with a recommendation that there should be a review of recent developments and of the outcome of pilot studies described, to ensure that the emerging pattern of arrangements for the consultation of faith communities at local and regional level is a coherent and effective one.

ii. Recent developments and issues in local consultation

- 5.2.1** There has been considerable activity to promote good practice in consultation of local faith communities by local authorities, and aspects of this good practice are applicable to local consultations by central Government.

“Faith and Community”

- 5.2.2** Following the June 2000 joint Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom and Inner Cities Religious Council conference “Inter Faith Co-operation, Local Government and the Regions: Councils of Faiths as a Resource for the 21st Century”, representatives of the Local Government Association proposed the preparation of guidelines designed to help local authorities in their relations with local faith communities. In February 2002, following 18 months of consultation and discussion by the Local Government Association in association with the Inter Faith Network, Inner Cities Religious Council and Home Office Active Communities Unit, *Faith and Community: a Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities* was published. This document was circulated to all English and Welsh local authorities and has had a significant impact. Copies may be obtained from the Local Government Association.

“Partnership for the Common Good”

- 5.2.3** The Inter Faith Network recently published a major report, *Local Inter Faith Activity in the UK: A Survey*, containing the findings of a six month mapping project undertaken by the Network with support from the Home Office. The report looked at how members of different faith communities are working together around the United Kingdom to increase inter faith understanding. It covered the spectrum of local inter faith activity, but with a special focus on local inter faith groups and councils, and on how local authorities are working in partnership with these to ensure that faith communities can give input to strategic community cohesion initiatives.
- 5.2.4** The report found that there are now around 140 local inter faith bodies, although these are at varying stages of development. Local authorities are also increasingly recognising the contribution that inter faith bodies can make to community cohesion, and 13% of local authorities indicate current financial support of a local inter faith group or council or multi faith forum.
- 5.2.5** At the same time as the publication of this report, the Inter Faith Network also published a short good practice booklet, *Partnership for the Common Good: Inter Faith Structures and Local Government*, in association with the Local Government Association, the Home Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This gives guidance for local authorities working to support or set up local inter faith or multi faith structures, bearing particularly in mind the need to ensure the appropriate involvement of faith communities in the context of initiatives such as development of community strategies or the work of Local Strategic Partnerships. Copies of the booklet, and of the full report, are available from the Inter Faith Network.

Recommendation for central government arising from “Partnership for the Common Good”:

Departments are encouraged, where appropriate, to use local inter faith bodies as a focus for consultations. Contact details for these are available from the Inter Faith Network.

New Deal for Communities Faith Pilots Project

- 5.2.6** There are also recent instances of central Government Departments involving local faith communities in developing policy. In Spring 2002, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Urban Policy Directorate and Neighbourhood Renewal Unit commissioned a pilot project to address the question of faith community engagement in the work of New Deal for Communities Partnerships. Early indications were that the level of the Churches’ engagement with Partnerships was not matched by that of the other faith communities. The main reasons for this appeared to be lack of resources, organisational structures and knowledge of New Deal for Communities processes.
- 5.2.7** Following consultation in 2000, the Inner Cities Religious Council in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had proposed an associated work programme, to be monitored by a Steering Group of experts in faith-based regeneration and community development. The principal aim was to identify factors which fostered or inhibited faith community engagement in the Partnerships’ work, but the opportunity would also be taken to improve understanding between faith communities, New Deal for Communities Partnerships, central and local government, and to encourage better use of faith community resources. The final report would also serve as a good practice guide for all New Deal for Communities Partnerships and others engaged in urban and neighbourhood renewal.
- 5.2.8** Various New Deal for Communities Partnerships were approached about the possibility of participating in the project. Three were selected (Bradford, Tower Hamlets and Wolverhampton), each in areas facing different challenges, with differing faith populations. A consultant project manager was appointed by competitive tender, who in turn appointed three field-workers, one for each Partnership. These were under the project manager’s day to day management, but employed by the New Deal for Communities Partnerships with salary costs reimbursed by Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Work began on identifying local faith representatives, agreeing actions and interventions for each neighbourhood and mapping local faith communities.
- 5.2.9** It was originally envisaged that the work would last about a year, proceeding simultaneously at all three Partnerships. In the event, largely because of the differing local circumstances and developmental stages reached by the Partnerships, the work was phased over a longer period. It was quickly realised that this would, in fact, help the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister gain insight

into a broader range of factors governing the interaction between New Deal for Communities and the faith communities, and the involvement of the latter in the Partnerships' work.

- 5.2.10** All three pilots are now complete. Initial results indicate that the capacity of a New Deal for Communities Partnership to work with faith communities is conditioned mainly by the degree to which the New Deal for Communities board and staff have already made good progress towards achieving some of the key objectives of their delivery plan. Bradford, for example, benefited from strong leadership at both board and staff levels and the fact that the New Deal for Communities Partnership saw and continue to see the value of working with faith communities towards the achievement of its objectives. A final project report highlighting examples of good practice will be produced during early 2004.

iii. Leeds pilot faiths consultation project

- 5.3.1** A decision was taken early in the present Review process that a time-limited local faiths consultation exercise should be undertaken in a specific locality. Its aim would be to pilot a local opportunity to engage with faith communities about Government policy and practices. It would test the effectiveness of various mechanisms for consulting the faith communities; provide an opportunity to examine where faith traditions can offer practical ways to tackle issues which confront Government in practice; and allow faith communities to have some influence on policy at an early stage of development.
- 5.3.2** The subject would be an area of Home Office policy, with the outputs of the exercise contributing usefully to the development and implementation of that policy. The consultative processes involved would also inform the Review and an analysis of their effectiveness would contribute to the final report. The pilot would take place in a locality which was likely to yield good results so that "good practice" lessons could be distilled for the report.
- 5.3.3** At the suggestion of the Prison Service Chaplain General, the Venerable William Noblett, the locality chosen was Leeds. The city has a rich mix of people from different faith backgrounds living locally. It also has a good tradition of respect, dialogue and co-operation between the different faith communities. It is an increasingly prosperous city with a good record of the various public agencies - City Council, Government Office, police, prison and probation services, Voluntary and Community Sector etc - effectively working together to address social problems.
- 5.3.4** The Home Office opted to invite a local inter faith body to take the lead in conducting the pilot consultation. The body chosen was the Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum, a proactive and well-established "network of networks" which was in a position to test a variety of different consultative methods. This said, the Forum lacked financial resources and so a small grant was made by the Home Office to allow the pilot to proceed. The Forum was able to commission a team based in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at

Leeds University to develop the consultation methodology and carry out the work in collaboration with Forum members and the Chaplaincy team at HMP Leeds.

- 5.3.5** It was decided by Home Office Ministers that the interaction between faith communities and the Criminal Justice System would be a suitable subject for the pilot. It would look at two elements:
- What happens to young men on discharge from prison: does their experience post-custody contribute to preventing re-offending and enabling them to play a positive role in society? Do faith groups have a role to play in supporting ex-offenders who may be cut off from the links which help people avoid crime, such as family, employment and a sense of connectedness to society?
 - At the same time and in conjunction with this, what do faiths have to contribute to the sentencing regimes contained in the new Criminal Justice Act? These provide for greater opportunities to undertake reparative activities and for victims to confront offenders, within the requirements of a community sentence and during the licence period of a custodial sentence. Most faiths have views on reparation and redemption; faith perspectives may therefore provide insights on how to create a community-based sentencing regime that is rehabilitative as well as challenging.
- 5.3.6** These two strands would complement each other. One focused on something that is well-known, i.e. the problems that face released offenders in re-integrating into society. The other used the insights gathered from reflections on the failures of the present regime to design more effective sentences which could be deployed under the new legislation, at a point where there is still an opportunity to influence what happens as the legislation is implemented.
- 5.3.7** The specific issues that the Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum were invited to address were:
- What are the problems facing young men when they are released from prison?
 - What are the factors that may cause them to re-offend?
 - Do ex-offenders from faith community backgrounds face any specific difficulties?
 - How can they be encouraged to play a positive role in society?
 - What can faith communities do to help reintegrate them and give them a sense of purpose?
 - What community sentences might help rehabilitation and lessen the chance of re-offending?
 - What do our faiths say about restorative and reparative justice, and about redemption?
 - Can there be a role for religious groups in advising the Criminal Justice System on sentencing?
 - Can faith communities do more to provide support to young men in prison and on release?
 - In what ways can Community Chaplaincy contribute to supporting offenders on release? How can such projects enhance the way in which faith communities work together?

5.3.8 The pilot concluded at the end of January 2004. Its final report has been published separately and contains detailed findings on the substance of the policy area under consideration (sentencing policy and the rehabilitation of offenders). This is available from the Faith Communities Unit. Chapters 1 to 3 report on the effectiveness of different methods for consulting the faith communities, and are reproduced at Appendix 5. Chapter 3 in particular contains useful practical advice on the best means of engaging with faith communities on the local level.

Recommendation: Departments carrying out consultations on a local level should take note of the messages contained in the final report of the Leeds Pilot Faiths Consultation about what methods of consultation work best.

5.3.9 It is recognised that Departments may not have resources to offer a grant to facilitate a local consultation, as the Home Office has done in this case to support the pilot study. It may be, however, that in those cases where local inter faith bodies receive funding support from their local authorities, they are able to assist with these local consultations without additional financial support.

5.3.10 Even if this is not the case, it is instructive to observe the broad range of consultative approaches that can be undertaken as a result of a comparatively modest investment (in the case of the Leeds pilot, just £6,500). In any case it seems unlikely that Departments would choose to adopt methods that are revealed in the report to be less effective, and this implies that the resourcing required to facilitate a successful local consultation can be even less than this figure.

iv. Local and regional consultation – Local Government Association seminar

5.4.1 In October 2003 the Local Government Association held a seminar for representatives of local authorities and faith communities, to take stock of ways in which the consultative and working relationships between local authorities and faith communities in their area could be further developed and improved. The speakers included Home Office Minister Fiona Mactaggart (Chair of the Review Steering Group), the Secretary of the Inner Cities Religious Council, the Director of the Inter Faith Network and senior figures from the five largest faith communities.

5.4.2 The seminar highlighted problems regarding local and regional consultation and pointed to further action which was needed. Although the seminar was primarily designed to look at local authorities and their relationship with faith communities, it emerged that central Government might also benefit from engagement with faith communities at local and especially regional level. It became clear that guidance in *Faith and Community* had proved valuable; and that in some ways, while practice is patchy, local government is ahead of central Government in this field in terms of available guidance.

5.4.3 Some of the points that emerged which are relevant to consultation by central Government at a local or regional level are set out below. Some corresponding recommendations are suggested. These are followed by a section on capacity building, as it is recognised that the lack of capacity of national, regional and local faith community groupings to respond effectively to Government invitations to participate in policy development or implementation is the single most significant obstacle to effective consultation.

Points relevant to consultation by central government

- Local faith community representative bodies often have very limited budgets.
- Local and regional faith community groupings are not designed with the primary aim of being consulted by Government and this creates problems from the outset.
- The regional structures of faith communities do not necessarily fit in neatly with the regional boundaries of government.
- Departments may try to overcome this problem by grouping faith organisations or asking for a collective response. This can result in local and regional faith representative groups often feeling as though they are being consulted in a tokenistic way.
- There are great local and regional variations between the faiths and it is not a solution to ask faith groups to marshal a single “faiths voice” regionally.

Recommendations:

- It is important for Departments to be sensitive to local and regional differences.
- Departments should not be deterred from consulting by the apparent obstacles.
- It is suggested that in order to ensure adequate participation by local faith groupings in consultative exercises, Departments should identify which are the most important issues for consulting faith communities, and target resources to allow faith community bodies to participate properly in these.

v) Future developments in regional structures

5.5.1 Maintaining a regional presence can be particularly difficult for smaller faith communities, and it is proving challenging in most regions for the full diversity of faith communities to maintain a meaningful relationship with regional bodies. Nevertheless, as well as single faith structures such as the well developed Churches Regional Network, multi faith regional structures like the South East of England Faith Forum and the newer West Midlands Faith Forum are starting to emerge. There would no doubt be benefits if the exchange of experience between these structures could be facilitated.

5.5.2 The Home Office strategically funds a series of regional infrastructure bodies. These vary in the degree to which they include and involve faith groups. The Government recognises, however, that in the long term it will be necessary to adopt a more strategic and comprehensive approach to building the capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector (including faith community-based bodies)

and the infrastructure it needs to participate in civil renewal. Building the capacity of local and regional groupings to respond effectively to central government consultations is part of this process.

- 5.5.3** The Home Office Active Communities Directorate is currently in consultation about the Government's approach to building local capacity and infrastructure. The Home Office Civil Renewal Unit has also issued a consultation document (*A Review of Government support for community capacity building and proposals for change*) which is looking at ways of ensuring that the provision of support (including financial support) to community groups, including faith-based groups, at neighbourhood/community level is better co-ordinated and strengthened. The results of both consultations will feed into a wider Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework. This long-term strategy is likely to highlight the need for all Departments to take responsibility for building sector capacity and some level of infrastructure within their policy areas.
- 5.5.4** The Government recognises that progress in this regard depends also on central and local public bodies working with voluntary organisations and community groups to ensure the best use of existing resources, and to increase their understanding and skill in engaging with communities. The *Compact Code of Good Practice on Community Groups* (July 2003) provides useful guidance to central Government Departments and agencies and local government, and highlights the importance of specific recognition of the needs of faith community groups within the wider sector. Copies are available from the Active Communities Directorate.
- 5.5.5** Although there is at present no direct capacity-building funding from central Government for service deliverers at the regional level, the Active Communities Directorate is helping to develop the regional Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure through supporting eighteen Regional Networks. These exist to increase the effectiveness of the sector in each region through the provision of information, advice, representation, training, publications and development services; to help unlock further funds for the sector at regional level; and to advocate effectively for it so as to ensure that it is consulted and recognised as valuable in different policy areas and across sectors.
- 5.5.6** Although beneficiaries of the Regional Networks programme may include faith-based voluntary projects alongside other parts of the sector, the extent to which faith communities are in reality part of Regional Networks and benefit from the non-financial support offered varies from region to region. In some regions, such as Yorkshire and the Humber, faith-based bodies and projects are recognised as a distinct and important part of the sector; in others, faith communities may struggle to gain access.
- 5.5.7** It is acknowledged that this is partly because faith communities themselves may have failed to play as full a part as they might have in local and regional Voluntary and Community Sector and Black and Minority Ethnic networks and structures, and one of the recommendations to faith communities in Chapter Three is that they should address this. However, in other cases faith

communities have not been invited to participate or have been prohibited from doing so. There are a number of steps which Departments might take to address this, and encourage the development of appropriate regional structures in which faith communities play a full part:

Recommendations:

- Faith Communities Unit to map the extent to which faith communities are benefiting from funding programmes designed to support Voluntary and Community Sector and Black and Minority Ethnic infrastructure, capacity and projects, and take action to address any deficiencies which emerge.
- Faith Communities Unit, Active Communities Directorate and Government Offices to work with Regional Networks to review the involvement of faith-based bodies and projects in regional structures, and their access to capacity building support, and to encourage the recognition that they are an integral part of the Voluntary and Community Sector and should be included in the mainstream. The results of this review to be considered when the members of the Review reconvene (see Chapter Six).
- Departments to note the advice contained in the Compact Code of Good Practice on Community Groups. Copies are available from the Active Communities Unit.
- Departments to make greater use of existing regional bodies, such as Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices for the Regions, to engage with emerging regional inter faith and single faith structures.
- Regional structures to recognise that faith-based bodies are a distinctive part of civil society and of the Voluntary and Community Sector, and can make a significant contribution to social cohesion, and be willing to open dialogue with them.

vi) Stocktaking exercise

- 5.6.1** As this Chapter has explained, there have been a number of positive developments in providing for appropriate patterns of consultation of faith communities at local level by both central and local government, and in developing appropriate structures at regional level. There have also been pilot projects, the recommendations of which need to be considered carefully, together with the recommendations about the future of development of local inter faith activity contained in the report of the Inter Faith Network's recent mapping project.

It is therefore recommended that: during the first half of 2004 the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Local Government Association and the Inter Faith Network should together look at the way in which the different developments and emerging structural frameworks relate to one another, so as to ensure that they provide a coherent framework for consultation with faith communities at both local and regional level, by national, regional and local government bodies.

Central consultative arrangements

i) Introduction

- 6.1.1** This chapter reviews the present “geography” of engagement by Government with the faith communities. It begins by setting out, in Section (ii), the present responsibilities of the main bodies involved in undertaking and facilitating consultation between central Government and the faith communities at national level, and the methods of consultation used by Departments; and then discusses in Section (iii) whether any changes should be made.
- 6.1.2** The scope of the Review is England only and therefore analysis of present consultative arrangements and exploration of possible future arrangements in the devolved administrations have not been carried out. However, the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly have observers on the Review and may wish to carry out similar exercises in due course.

ii) Present responsibilities

- 6.2.1** At present, the following bodies play key roles in ensuring that the voice of faith communities is heard within Government.

Government

Faith Communities Unit (Home Office)

- 6.2.2** The new Unit provides Ministers and officials across Whitehall with advice on religious and faith community issues, and aims to raise faith awareness and literacy in all Government Departments. It has been in the lead in organising this Review.
- 6.2.3** The Unit is presently developing its outreach to faith communities so that the Government better understands the impact of its policies on them, and is increasingly engaging with these communities to encourage their participation at all levels in civil society. It also seeks to promote dialogue between faith communities. Among the Unit’s other responsibilities are examining issues surrounding religious hate crime and delivering the annual Holocaust Memorial Day.

Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group (Home Office)

- 6.2.4** The Community Cohesion Panel was set up in the wake of the disturbances in the North West of England in 2001. The Panel has several component

Practitioner Groups, one of which is the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group. This has been looking at how faith communities can contribute to community cohesion. Its report is due in early 2004, when the Group will wind up.

Inner Cities Religious Council (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)

- 6.2.5** The Council was established in 1992, and reviewed and re-launched as an advisory forum in 1997 under the new administration. Chaired by an Minister within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, it meets three times a year. Its members come from five faith communities, appointed for a 3-year term at the discretion of the Minister. The Council offers advice to Ministers, officials and faith communities. Its core agenda is urban policy and regeneration, but it has increasingly acted as a generalist consultative group dealing (at the request of other Government Departments) with a wider range of issues – e.g. multi faith chaplaincy in the armed forces and hospitals, religious discrimination and the question on religion in the 2001 Census.
- 6.2.6** The Inner Cities Religious Council sponsors and participates in work relating to the involvement of faiths in neighbourhood renewal and regeneration; has an interest in the appropriate involvement of faiths in Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Empowerment Networks; and advises on issues relating to faiths and local government, and faiths and regional structures.

The picture across Whitehall

- 6.2.7** The Review has carried out a survey of the different ways in which central Government Departments consult faith communities. The results of this survey are set out in Appendix 1. The methods Departments use for consultation fall into the following categories:
- Standing arrangements. These take three main forms:
 - 1) Some Departments with policy areas of particular significance to faith communities have set up standing committees or panels of faith representatives with specialist knowledge of the issues concerned. The Inner Cities Religious Council, the Ministry of Defence's Religious Advisory Panel and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Religious Freedom Panel have been identified under this heading. All have a specific focus but may be asked to advise on wider issues. This is particularly the case for the Inner Cities Religious Council.
 - 2) Bilateral and multilateral meetings with faith community leaders or representatives. The Prime Minister holds some such meetings.
 - 3) Panels of faith advisers or informal networks of faith contacts.
 - The chaplaincies of the Prison Service, National Health Service and Ministry of Defence, which are primarily for the delivery of religious ministry to prisoners, patients and service personnel but which the Departments also utilise as sources of advice on policy and service delivery. The Prison Service's Chaplaincy Council meets six times a year and the Ministry of Defence has a Working Group of chaplains from the armed forces.

- One-off, time limited groups set up to advise on specific policy issues. The Steering Group for this Review, the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group, the Lambeth Group at the time of the Millennium and the Department for Education and Skills' Steering Group for the creation of a non-statutory national framework for Religious Education, all established on a time-limited basis to carry out specific tasks, are examples.
- Other ad hoc arrangements when Departments need advice on specific issues. The methods include conferences, multilateral and bilateral meetings, and written consultations. These are sometimes addressed specifically to faith representatives. At other times Departments will simply include faith groups in discussion or consultation with a wider range of interests.
- Relationships with local and community-based faith groups, sometimes based on funding provision by the Department. For example, the Department of Health funds several faith-based community organisations and places of worship to develop their capability to undertake health and social welfare-related activities for the local population.

6.2.8 The survey revealed that all Departments have engaged with faith communities at some level but that engagement often varies between different parts of Departments. Although there do not tend to be specific Departmental requirements to consult the faith communities many Departments do so as a matter of good practice.

6.2.9 All Departments have undertaken written consultations and some use the Departmental website to do so. The majority have also met with faith community representatives to discuss specific issues. Departments have tended to find that face to face consultation is most likely to yield the best results. Many Departments have good dialogue with Christian, Muslim and Jewish groups but recognise the need to extend this to other faith groups. Some Departments have commented on the complexity of structures within faith communities, especially those with less centralised and co-ordinated arrangements. Several Departments have commented that information from the Faith Communities Unit and the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom has proved useful.

Other important developments

6.2.10 In December 2003 new regulations came into force providing for the first time statutory protection against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief in training and employment.

6.2.11 The Government has established a Task Force to plan the development of a Commission for Equality and Human Rights, which would have combating religious discrimination among its responsibilities. Three members of the Task Force are linked to the "religion" constituency, sharing two seats between them. One of these is a representative of the Inter Faith Network. There is also a separate member linked to the "non-religious belief" constituency.

Faith communities

Umbrella organisations

- 6.2.12** The various faith umbrella bodies can be a focal point for processing faith community responses to Government consultations. They provide Departments and other faith communities with advice and information about their respective faiths and structures. Departments should note, however, that umbrella organisations are not always the most appropriate focal point for consultations, though they may often be a useful starting point. Much consultation will be bilateral and specific to particular groups with specific knowledge of the issues involved (e.g. voluntary aided schools and animal slaughter regulations).
- 6.2.13** The structures within faith communities are not a matter for recommendations by this Review. Clearly, for there to be effective dialogue between faiths and between faiths and Government the structures within each faith need to be understood by those outside it. The Review has highlighted the complexity that exists and the fact that each faith has very different arrangements and circumstances, and (as noted in paragraphs 3.2.7 to 3.2.9) the nature of these will inevitably reflect the way consultations are carried out by central Government with a particular community. In particular:
- There is an important distinction between religious and community structures. Most faith communities have both. Departments need to be aware of the distinction in order to ensure that consultation about a particular issue is addressed to the right quarter, although the two categories of faith organisations often have overlapping interests.
 - The faith communities vary in the extent of their centralisation. Some have a religious head and centralised religious structures, while others do not.
 - Umbrella organisations vary in the extent to which they represent their faith community. Some faith communities have several umbrella organisations which vary in structure and constituency.
 - Structures can change and from time to time new organisations may be set up.

Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom

- 6.2.14** The Inter Faith Network is a non-governmental body (currently with some Home Office funding), founded in 1987 to link inter faith activity and develop good relations between people of different faiths living in the UK. The Network links and shares information between faith community bodies, national inter faith initiatives, local inter faith initiatives and multi faith educational and academic bodies. It runs a public information and advice service on inter faith issues, and provides contact information for inter faith organisations, faith community representative bodies and multi faith educational bodies.
- 6.2.15** Through its national meetings and membership category meetings, the Inter Faith Network provides a forum for discussion of multi faith and inter faith issues. It publishes resources and holds seminars and conferences to assist development of inter faith relations; and also works with faith communities and inter faith

organisations, as appropriate, on special inter faith projects such as those to mark the Millennium and Golden Jubilee. In relation to Government sponsored events or projects, it undertakes aspects of these which it might be inappropriate for Government to undertake itself.

- 6.2.16** The Inter Faith Network works with partners such as the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Local Government Association on projects to increase inter-community understanding and community cohesion, such as the publications *Faith and Community* and *Partnership for the Common Good: Inter Faith Structures and Local Government*; and with relevant educational bodies such as the Religious Education Council and the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for RE to ensure inter faith issues are addressed in the schools curriculum.
- 6.2.17** The Inter Faith Network's new Faith Communities Consultative Forum provides a forum for faith communities' representative bodies to address issues of common concern, both in the area of their mutual relations and in the area of faith and public life; and promotes the development of closer working relationships between them. Under its Terms of Reference the Forum is not authorised to issue statements on behalf of the faith communities collectively or to take policy decisions on their behalf.
- 6.2.18** The membership of the Forum consists of national faith representative bodies currently in membership of the Network, together with the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum, the Scottish Inter Faith Council and the Inter Faith Council for Wales. The Forum is welcomed by Government as it aids cohesion and provides an articulate partner for discussions.

iii) Future arrangements

- 6.3.1** The Review has looked at these current national structures and arrangements and has considered whether any changes or additional measures, beyond the recommendations in earlier chapters, would further strengthen co-operation between Government and faith communities.
- 6.3.2** At present, the model in use is a decentralised one, which places the responsibility on Departments to ensure that faith issues and interests are fully engaged in the conduct of their business. The model recognises that the relevance of faith considerations varies according to the policy topic and that therefore the level of engagement required from Departments will be greater in some fields than others.
- 6.3.3** The role of individual Departments will inevitably remain crucial to building a dynamic partnership between Government and faith communities. If the views and needs of faith communities are to be influential and the relationship robust, and that must be the key aim of this Review, then it must be individual Departments which take responsibility for mainstreaming faith issues into their work. The question has been what Government can do centrally to support Departments and faith communities in achieving that sort of relationship.

Survey of Departmental consultative arrangements

- 6.3.4** The Review undertook a survey of Departmental arrangements and structures. Its findings, listed in Appendix 1, have been summarised earlier in this chapter. These show that Departments have a range of consultative mechanisms in play. Some have been in place on a long-term basis while others have been established temporarily to meet specific initiatives or pieces of work. In yet other cases one-off meetings, conferences and consultations are used, whether on a bilateral or multilateral basis. Arrangements vary in terms of their degree of formality or informality, in whether Departmental Ministers take part, and in the extent to which they include engagement with faith communities at local as well as national level.
- 6.3.5** The survey suggests that personal relationships are very important to the health of the Government / faith communities relationship and that both sides need to make the effort of building and sustaining such relationships.
- 6.3.6** It is recommended that Departments keep their consultative arrangements under review, so that they can be adjusted or added to as experience shows is necessary. They need to be prepared to supplement formal mechanisms by ad hoc meetings with faith community representatives in order to keep relationships in good repair.

Survey of current business requiring consultation with faith communities

- 6.3.7** The Review also asked Departments to carry out an exercise of identifying which of their current and forthcoming policy areas they saw as requiring consultation with faith communities. The Review has noted the resulting list of impending consultation subjects. This exercise should be helpful in three ways:
- It has helped Departments to focus on the faith dimension of their work in a concrete way;
 - It has alerted faith representatives in the Review to areas of Government business on which their community is now being or will shortly be consulted;
 - It will provide a basis for assessing down the line whether consultation has actually taken place and what impact it has had on the particular subjects concerned.
- 6.3.8** It was not intended that this exercise should detract from the encouragement given to faith communities to take the initiative in raising issues which they, whether individually or collectively, wish to discuss with Government. The Review has noted that there could be advantage in repeating this exercise in Government from time to time.

Helping faith communities to be effective partners with Government

- 6.3.9** The Review has considered how the faith communities should contribute to the formulation of Government policy, and their capacity to make that contribution. The starting point is that, for partnership to be effective, the relationship must

be based on mutuality: both parties to it must accept a responsibility for making it work. Faith leaders and representatives must be willing to contribute their community's views if they want to inform and influence Government policy.

6.3.10 Faith representatives on the Review have raised as a significant concern the question of faith-based organisations' capacity to co-operate with Government, especially in the context of increased levels of engagement in the wake of the Review. Some of those involved in the Review have argued that Government should be willing to make some capacity-building investment in faith-based organisations. Others would be concerned about the effect of such funding on the independence of faith-based organisations.

Measures the Review has identified as necessary to support engagement between Departments and faith communities on faith issues

6.3.11 The Review has made it clear that Government centrally needs to supplement and support the responsibility placed on Departments, by ensuring that there is an arrangement for:

- Helping Departments to understand when and how to engage with faith issues and communities, including providing advice about the good practice in this report;
- Giving Departments advice about the structures available for consultation within faith communities.

6.3.12 The Government also needs to support the responsibility placed on faith communities by:

- Providing a point of contact for faith communities which want advice about how to engage with Government or help in finding their way around Whitehall;
- Ensuring that faith-based organisations do not face unnecessary additional barriers when applying for funding under Government programmes and are aware of the programmes that are available to them;
- Maintaining a close relationship with faith leaders and representatives, so that they can flag up either any concerns that good practice is not being followed or new issues which Government needs to address.

Need for evaluation

6.3.13 The Review has also identified a need for a high level evaluation to be carried out after a suitable interval of the impact this Report has had on co-operation between Government and faith communities, including on the capacity of faith communities to be effective partners with Government, in the light of both the Report's recommendations and the consultation topics mentioned above.

The Government's proposed response

6.3.14 The Government proposes to respond to these various identified needs (paragraphs 6.3.9-6.3.13) in the following ways:

A. Faith Communities Unit

6.3.15 The recently established Faith Communities Unit within the Home Office will lead on faith issues across Whitehall. It has been charged with the dual role of supporting capacity building in Government on faith matters, and keeping in touch with faith communities (both in order to provide a point of contact on concerns or new issues, as suggested above, and as a way of monitoring the health of the overall relationship between Government and faith communities). The Unit will liaise with the Inner Cities Religious Council which, whilst focusing primarily on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister policy areas, will continue to be available to handle any broader Government / faith issues insofar as they are not addressed in other ways, at least until the Review reconvenes in 2005 (see F below).

B. Inter departmental committee

6.3.16 The Government will set up an inter departmental official committee, serviced by the Faith Communities Unit, with the aim of mainstreaming faith issues. It will provide a vehicle for the exchange of good practice on matters relating to faith and other ethical belief systems and of information about the Government's relationships with faith communities. It would allow broad social issues that have a faith dimension but are not embedded in any one Government Department to be addressed. Although the committee will not be a forum for dialogue with faith communities, members of the faith communities may be invited to contribute on occasion.

C. Faith community contacts

6.3.17 The Home Office will build on and utilise the excellent relationships it has developed with its faith community contacts, including the faith community members of the Review's Working Group and Advisory Panel and the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group. It will also maintain its close working relationship with the Inter Faith Network on a range of issues. The Network's Faith Communities Consultative Forum is developing as an effective forum for faith communities to come together. A Home Office Minister has attended a meeting of the Forum and there will be opportunities for further Ministerial or official level contact.

D. Role of Ministers

6.3.18 Home Office Ministers will play their part through meetings with faith representatives as necessary, and encourage colleagues in other Departments to do likewise.

E. Capacity issues

6.3.19 Earlier chapters have identified practical ways in which Departments can help faith representatives and communities to respond to requests for views on Government policy, or to raise new issues, and the Report has noted that it can be appropriate for a Department to resource a community consultation exercise or pilot project, including exercises and projects involving faith communities.

6.3.20 Subject to that, the Government draws a distinction between the role of faith-based organisations in representing the views of their members and communities on the one hand, and on the other hand the role they can play as partners with each other and with Government in the work of building cohesive and active communities on the ground, including their ability to work together through good inter-faith co-operation. In principle the Government sees supporting the latter as a potentially proper and effective use of public funds for the good of society.

6.3.21 As regards the former, the Government thinks it important that views advanced by faith-based organisations are authentic and independent and reflect the commitment of their members, and would expect the expression of views to Government to be resourced by communities themselves. There is an important principle that voluntary sector organisations should not be dependent on Government funding, and this applies equally to faith community bodies. The Government would also wish to avoid a situation whereby different faith community representative bodies would be in competition for capacity funding.

F. Evaluating the impact of this Review

6.3.22 The Government considers that a period of a year should be allowed to pass to allow time for the recommendations of this report to make a difference and for their impact to be evaluated. It therefore proposes to invite the members of the Review to reconvene shortly after the anniversary of the Review's completion to assess what impact it has had. The evaluation will be based on criteria approved by the Review's members, and will take account of this report's good practice recommendations and of the topics for consultation identified by Departments during the Review.

6.3.23 In the interim, there may be a need for some ongoing follow-up work to be undertaken by the Faith Communities Unit, liaising with other Government Departments to ensure that the organisations and individuals which they consulting are the appropriate ones, and to address any difficulties which might arise.

The case for and against a new Government / faith communities forum

6.3.24 The Review has looked at the case for setting up a new high level forum for dialogue between Government and faith community representatives. There are arguments for and against doing so.

For

- The Inner Cities Religious Council, chaired by a Minister within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, has in recent years tackled a number of issues going beyond its core urban policy agenda and therefore the responsibilities of the ODPM. That may suggest that there is a need for a general consultative forum - a role which may not be best played by the Inner Cities Religious

Council itself, especially as its work is now likely to be re-focused mainly onto the agenda of the ODPM.

- More generally, the Review has noted that there is a wider social and moral discourse on which faith leaders and representatives are well qualified and eager to engage with Government and which cannot be encompassed in consultations around Departmental business. On one view, a standing forum at which faith leaders and Ministers came together with a broad remit would be a way of enabling such a dialogue to take place.
- A new forum could be charged with monitoring compliance with and the impact of this Review. There is an argument that it could help to keep faith issues on the Government agenda and to assess the state of the relationship between Government and faith communities.
- On one model, such a forum could be a single point of contact, so that faith representatives could flag up in the forum concerns on any issue, regardless of departmental boundaries.

Against

- The objective of invigorating Government's relationship with faith communities depends crucially on individual Departments taking this issue to heart. The focus should therefore be on ways of encouraging them to do so and helping them to engage dynamically with faith communities and contacts at both official and Ministerial level. There is a risk that the creation of a new central standing forum would detract from that aim: that relegating faith issues to it would have the effect of marginalising them rather than raising their profile, and weakening rather than strengthening the responsibility placed on Departments to ensure that they address faith issues in the conduct of their business.
- The broader dialogue referred to above is indeed a valued part of a healthy civil society, but the better way to facilitate it is for Ministers and faith leaders to show the necessary personal commitment to it, and to create opportunities and space for such dialogue to take place.
- A purpose-built standing forum for general dialogue between Government and faith leaders would raise new and very tricky questions about membership. Such questions have been less difficult in relation to existing Government / faith community forums, because they have been time-limited bodies (like the Steering Group for this Review) or bodies created in order to handle specific Departmental subjects (like the Inner Cities Religious Council). It would be necessary to decide whether members would formally represent their faith communities, which might then be faced with having to agree on who to select to represent them.
- The establishment of such a forum would probably require an extended period of consultation before it could be implemented, and the Government is keen to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place as soon as possible.
- There is a risk that a general forum would lack focus and therefore become ineffective.

6.3.25 The conclusion that has been reached is that the case for a new forum is not proven, that its establishment would be premature and that more flexible arrangements are preferable. The Home Office already has well developed channels of communication with faith communities and a range of advisers on faith community issues. This will be drawn on and developed as necessary, in a flexible and evolving way. Home Office Ministers and officials will meet faith representatives as and when it is desirable to do so. This may well give greater flexibility than occasional meetings of a standing forum.

6.3.26 However, it is proposed against this background that following the Review's completion in early 2004, the Steering Group should, when it reconvenes in 2005 to carry out the proposed evaluation of impact, consider in the light of experience over the coming year whether any additional central machinery or forum is required at that juncture.

People with no religious beliefs

6.3.27 The Government believes that in most cases the perspective which faith communities can bring will tend to improve the quality of public policies and services for all.

6.3.28 However, a significant minority of the population have no religious affiliation (15.5% according to the 2001 Census). Some of these may subscribe to a non-religious belief system such as humanism, others may have no organised belief system at all. Government has an obligation to ensure that if, as a result of consultation with faith communities, a Department plans a change which meets the needs of a faith community there is no adverse impact on people without religious beliefs. With that in mind:

- It must remain the Government's responsibility to weigh faith views and interests against any competing views and interests in making a judgement about where the public interest lies;
- When consulting faith communities, Departments should usually give an opportunity to comment to organisations representing those with non-religious beliefs, such as humanists and secularists (the Faith Communities Unit can provide contact details);
- Any assessment of the impact of this report should include consideration of whether it has resulted in any absolute or relative disadvantage to or discrimination against those who do not hold religious beliefs;
- The Faith Communities Unit should include humanists and secularists among its contacts.

Recommendations:

- Individual Departments to continue to develop their own effective consultative arrangements, supplemented by Ministerial visits and meetings.
- A broader engagement by Government with faith communities and where appropriate with groups representing non-religious belief systems to be undertaken as needed.
- The Faith Communities Unit to support capacity building within faith communities by:
 - (i) Issuing guidance to Departments running community capacity building programmes to ensure that faith communities are not excluded from such programmes;
 - (ii) Assessing the degree of access of faith communities to capacity-building funding programmes and pressing for the removal of unnecessary obstacles.
- The Faith Communities Unit to support capacity building in Departments by:
 - (i) Servicing a new inter departmental official committee, with the aim of mainstreaming faith issues. The committee will provide a vehicle for the exchange of good practice on matters relating to faith and other ethical belief systems and of information about the Government's discussions/consultations with faith communities;
 - (ii) Building on and utilising the excellent relationships it has developed with its faith community contacts (including the faith members of the Review's Working Group and Advisory Panel, the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group, the Inter Faith Network and its Faith Communities Consultative Forum).
- The Review members to reconvene in 2005, when this report's recommendations have been in place for a year, to evaluate what impact the Review has had, including on capacity building in Government and faith communities. The assessment to be based on agreed criteria and to take account of this report's good practice recommendations and of the topics for consultation identified by Departments during the Review. The Home Office to begin preparing papers for this meeting in good time, in consultation with members of the Review.
- At that time, the Review members to revisit the question of whether any additional central Government / faith communities forum is needed.
- When consulting faith communities Departments normally to give an opportunity to comment to organisations representing those with non-religious beliefs, such as humanists and secularists.
- Evaluation of the impact of this report to include consideration of whether there is any evidence of disadvantage to those who do not hold religious beliefs.
- The Faith Communities Unit to include humanists and secularists among its contacts.
- The Government to ensure that faith issues are effectively addressed in the programme of work that is now underway to further extend safeguards against discrimination including the proposed Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

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Prison Chaplaincy Team

Members of the Review Steering Group, Review Working Group, Panel of Advisers and
Secretariat

List of Departmental Consultative Arrangements

Cabinet Office

The Cabinet Office is not a service provider department in the same way as many other departments but has engaged with faith communities nevertheless. Contact with faith communities tends to be on an ad-hoc basis rather than regular consultation in a standardised way. Examples include officials meeting with university faith groups to raise awareness of the Civil Service Fast Stream and pro-active consultation with minority ethnic groups including faith-based groups, in relation to Cabinet Office work projects.

The Prime Minister and his officials meet religious leaders and other representatives of different faiths, and representatives of bodies working to develop inter-faith relations, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The Prime Minister has also made a number of visits to events involving faith communities. The Prime Minister and Mrs Blair hosted a reception to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Council of Christians and Jews on 21 January 2003.

The Prime Minister and his staff helped to facilitate the first high-level international seminar of Christian-Muslim scholars held at Lambeth Palace under the chairmanship of the then Archbishop of Canterbury in early 2002 (mentioned in the last Cabinet Office report) and, in association with it, the Prime Minister hosted a reception for all the main faiths in the UK. Members of the Prime Minister's staff attended the second of the high-level seminars held in Qatar in 2003.

No. 10 helped to facilitate the secondment of an official to assist a continuing initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury's to foster dialogue between Christians and Muslims in England.

Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA)

As the Department responsible for Church/State relations (the constitutional implications of the established status of the Church of England and the implications of establishment for other faiths), the DCA liaises frequently with the Church of England on relevant policy development, certain legislation and Church Measures. The Department also maintains a "watching brief" on issues that could affect the established Church, though it is not necessarily involved in the consultations between the Church and other Government Departments.

Contact with the Church of England and other faith communities is made through meetings between Ministers and/or officials and senior faith representatives, exchanges of correspondence and formal and informal consultation exercises, as appropriate. Although there is no specific Departmental requirement to consult the faith communities when developing policy that will affect them, the Department aims to do so, as the need arises, as a matter of good practice.

The Department also tries to alert faith communities in advance of significant Departmental announcements or consultations that may affect them. The Department liaises with the Inter

Faith Network for the UK regarding representation of different faith communities at the annual Remembrance Day ceremony at the Cenotaph and with the Home Office Faith Communities Unit, as necessary, on the representation of faith communities in consultation exercises.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Departments within DCMS engage with faith communities in a variety of ways. The Department recognises the close links between race and faith and ensures that faith communities are consulted where appropriate. Some divisions maintain good personal contacts with different faith communities and with the Inter Faith Network. Faith communities are consulted both formally and informally, one example being broadcasting forums that were held recently to discuss religious broadcasting issues. The Department aims to be faith sensitive, as demonstrated by one division who ensure that meetings with Muslim women were attended by female representatives. It liaises with particular faith communities on specific projects such as the Sikh community on a health/physical activity project.

Department for Education and Skills

Formal consultation on main policy areas is carried out via printed consultation documents. In addition to the formal distribution, all consultation documents appear on the Department's website and any individual or organisation may respond. The preparation of consultation documents includes an assessment of the impact of proposals on groups likely to be particularly affected, and every effort is made to ensure that views are received from all such groups.

The Department's standard list of consultee organisations includes several faith organisations. Smaller faiths are not consulted as standard. The Department consults widely with the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church on virtually all policy issues. The Christian faiths provide around 30% of state schools in England and these groups are prominent, almost exclusive, amongst faith respondents. Jewish groups have also provided state schools for a number of years and they too are consulted routinely, and tend to respond. More recently Muslims, Sikhs, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Seventh Day Adventists have set up schools in the state sector and groups representing these faiths are increasingly consulted. Meetings with faith groups about policy issues are carried out at all levels within the Department, both regularly and on an ad-hoc basis.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Defra includes faith groups in formal consultation where appropriate, and has less formal contact through a range of Ministerial and official working groups and consultative meetings at which both Defra and faith organisations are represented. Formal consultation is carried out through letters, press notices and publication on the Defra website. Defra follows guidance for written consultation exercises to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for responses, and subscribes to the Compact on relations between Government and the voluntary sector.

Examples of face to face contact include the Rural Affairs Forum and its thematic sub-groups, on many of which faith groups are represented. During the Foot and Mouth outbreak, the role of faith groups in holding together rural communities was highlighted. The Rural Team in Hexham

made regular contact with the local vicar, keeping her up to date with changing policy and progression of the disease. She in turn kept her parishioners informed, as their support mechanism, and reported back any issues causing concern in her parish.

Defra also encourages representation of faith groups where appropriate on its regional consultative groups organised by the Government Offices for the Regions.

Department of Health

The Department recognises the diverse health needs within communities and the key role played by faith organisations, supporting NHS and social care organisations, to improve the health and well being of local people. It has consulted with faith communities in a variety of ways and using a variety of methods, rather than creating a Department-wide policy. In 2000 the Department hosted a conference which brought together various religious leaders and health professionals to discuss the ethics and religious perspectives on organ donation and transportation. In 2001 the Chief Medical Officer consulted Muslim health professionals to launch an awareness campaign aimed at a specific health problem in the Muslim community.

The Department hosts meetings with faith organisations to discuss specific issues, such as cultural aspects of end-of-life care, as well as more general topics, such as how to improve the delivery of healthcare services for local communities. The Department also funds several faith-based community organisations and places of worship to develop their capability to undertake a range of educational, health and social welfare activities and to provide support and advice on general and health related issues to the local population. The Department feels that continuous engagement with these groups has helped to increase understanding of the related ethical issues necessary in order to improve the delivery of health and social care services.

Department for International Development (DfID)

DfID consults faith communities on an ad-hoc basis through policy panels, open requests for contribution to external consultation, and through the development awareness team.

DfID's development awareness work is concentrated around four main target groups: formal education, the media, business and trade unions, and churches and faiths. The Department's key objective in its work with faith groups is to build and support a world-wide alliance within the groups to eliminate poverty. The Department has produced a series of Target 2015 booklets in partnership with faith groups. These booklets were produced after an extensive period of collaboration and consultation and some have been launched by the Secretary of State. Through the Development Awareness Fund the Department is currently funding development awareness building initiatives led by different faith groups.

Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)

The DTI has a number of commitments which require officials to take into account all aspects of diversity, including religion, in assessing the impact of policies. Many directorates have consulted faith communities through written letters, meetings and roundtable discussions. The Women and Equality Unit leads on engaging with minority ethnic groups and faith communities. Unit officials have used various methods of consultation including consultation documents,

round table meetings, conferences, seminars and visits and have found that conferences and seminars provide an excellent opportunity to speak to equality practitioners on an informal basis. They make use of Government consultation guidance issued by the Cabinet Office and lists of faith groups provided by the Home Office Faith Communities Unit.

The Minister for Women has held seminars, conferences and events aimed at faith groups and holds regular meetings with women from various faith communities. The Employment Relations directorate has recently held a number of larger consultations involving faith groups and has had a good response rate. It attributed their success to the generous consultation period and press coverage of negotiations which alerted religious communities to the issue. The Directorate built up its original mailing list from contributions that had been developed over time. Organisations which subsequently responded or phoned were added and consultation documents and draft regulations were made available on the DTI website.

Department for Transport

The Department does not currently regularly engage with faith communities. However, all key documents and consultations are posted on the Department's website to encourage wide-ranging responses. The Department recently carried out research into the transport requirements and the provision of public transport for minority ethnic and faith communities. Included in the methods used were discussion groups, interviews and case studies. Voluntary and religious organisations who may have had information about the travel needs of their members were contacted.

The Department intends to hold a conference, *Transport Requirements of Minority Ethnic and Faith Communities*, through which it will announce results and introduce good practice guidance. The Department will be looking closely at the outcome of the research and will consider ways to improve communication with faith groups.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

The Department engages with faith communities and uses a process which is embedded in operational practice. It has produced guidance titled *Local liaison and consultation between DWP businesses and local customer organisations*. This guidance provides details on the rationale, benefits and best practice around liaison and consultation with organisations, including faith community groups. It gives details on when to talk to local organisations, advising regular liaison meetings, open channels for feedback and issue resolving.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

The FCO has been engaging with the faith communities on a regular basis, both through initiatives such as the Human Rights Policy Department's Religious Freedom Panel and through regular Ministerial briefings and involvement in Ministerial regional visits.

The main highlight of the FCO's engagement with the faith communities has been the recent Multi-Faith Week (October 2003), which amongst a number of events included a faith open day and a seminar entitled Faith and Foreign Policy. The seminar involved participants from the majority of British faith communities including Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and Christian representatives, and those from smaller faiths.

As an outcome of the seminar, the FCO is in the process of implementing a ten point action plan to improve its engagement with the faith communities.

Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS)

The Prison Service has over the last few years been taking forward a significant programme of work to improve multi faith provision and to develop the Chaplaincy on a fully inclusive basis. An essential part of this has been the involvement of representatives from the different religions.

The HQ Chaplaincy team is headed by the Chaplain General (Church of England), and includes a full time Muslim Adviser, a Methodist/Free Church Adviser and the Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain. Building on previous forums, the Chaplain General has recently established a Chaplaincy Council. This, together with Chaplaincy HQ, provides the Prison Service with the information and advice it needs to ensure appropriate provision is made for the different faith traditions, and enables broader issues to be looked at from a faith perspective (for example, resettlement issues).

The Chaplaincy Council meets six times a year and includes the Prison Service Faith Advisers for the main faiths. As well as providing advice and guidance to the Chaplaincy, it is a forum for representatives to raise issues of mutual concern and interest.

The Prison Service has clarified and formalised the role of the Faith Advisers, some of whom have worked with the Service for many years. Faith Advisers have helped to draw up detailed guidance for prisons to enable the faith needs of prisoners to be met, and also provide a faith perspective and input on broader areas of policy and practice. In addition to the meetings of the Chaplaincy Council, the Chaplain General holds regular bilateral meetings with the Faith Advisers and there is regular two-way communication.

All prisons appoint Chaplains from a range of different faith traditions depending on the needs of the prison. These Chaplains are the first point of advice for prisons on specific faith issues. In March 2003, the Prison Service Chaplaincy held its first National Conference for Chaplains of all faith traditions - "Making a Difference". This was attended by some 450 delegates as well as the then Prisons Minister and Director General.

In its recognition of the faith needs of prisoners, the Prison Service values the interest and commitment of the wider faith communities in helping prisoners whilst in prison and on release.

Home Office

Policy units within the Home Office do not have a specific requirement to consult faith communities on issues which may affect them. At present there is a strong emphasis on the importance of race and ethnicity and this emphasis is extending to religion in many units. There is a growing recognition of the importance of engaging with key stakeholders and community representatives. Many units currently engage with Christian, Jewish and Muslim groups but fewer consult the smaller faith groups. Many directorates have experienced a low response rate from faith groups and estimate that this may be due to the nature of the consultation and the time allowed for responses. Directorates have compiled lists of contacts within the faith communities from meetings with the Race Equality Unit, the Race and Diversity Action Team, and the new Faith Communities Unit.

The Faith Communities Unit is presently developing its outreach to faith communities so that the Government better understands the impact of its policies on them, and is increasingly engaging with these communities to encourage their participation at all levels in civil society. It meets with representatives of faith communities, faith-based groups and undertakes visits to places of worship and community projects. It also seeks to promote dialogue between faith communities.

The Home Office set up a Community Cohesion Panel in the wake of the disturbances in the North West of England in 2001. The Panel has several component Practitioner Groups, one of which is the Community Cohesion Faith Practitioners Group, which has been meeting regularly to look at how faith communities can contribute to community cohesion.

Ministry of Defence (MOD)

As the MOD does not deliver services directly to the public its main involvement with faith groups is as an employer. It recognises that much of its work with faith communities needs to be about building confidence and gaining perspectives on how the Armed Services might appeal to particular faiths rather than consultation on specific policies or issues.

The Naval Service, Army and Royal Air Force have established Diversity Action or Ethnic Minority Recruitment Teams in areas with high ethnic minority populations to engage directly with the local community. They are engaged in a wide variety of initiatives including forming new Community Partnerships with religious organisations, youth centres, festival organisers and the ethnic media, and visiting places of worship. The Army's ethnic minority recruiting campaign, for example, involves about 60 meetings a year with different faith groups, but these meetings tend to consist of general discussion to build relationships rather than consultation on a specific issue of concern. Over the last three years there have been at least 150 meetings with faith communities, including visits by senior officers to places of worship. The proportion of recruits from minority faiths to the Armed Forces has steadily increased over recent years.

Consultation on specific policies is done through advice from a Religious Advisory Panel consisting of religious leaders from the five main minority faiths. The members of the Panel act as advisers on matter of religious requirements and ensure that personnel from minority faiths receive appropriate pastoral and spiritual care. The Armed Forces have also established a Multi Faith Working Group consisting of Chaplains from each of the three Services to develop multi-faith co-operation. A Multi Faith Directory was published in September 2003. The Directory lists local religious contacts to which members of minority faiths can be referred and will be available at all Service establishments.

The MOD Civil Service is examining faith issues that might impact on civil servants and may also affect future recruitment from faith communities. An employees' forum has been set up on the intranet to gauge whether there is interest in activities such as focus groups.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

Engagement with faith communities in the Department varies greatly between units. Some units have had no engagement with faith communities, whereas one ODPM unit contains the Inner Cities Religious Council which is currently the most prominent inter faith consultative body within central Government. The Urban White Paper, Our towns and cities: the future- Delivering

an urban renaissance, emphasises the importance of consulting faith communities in the context of urban renewal, citing their Voluntary and Community Sector role and overlap with ethnic minority communities. The presence of the Inner Cities Religious Council in ODPM also means that faith communities are often consulted about main policy developments.

The Department has provided advice for officials on engagement with faith communities in the publication *Involving Communities in Urban & Rural Regeneration - a guide for practitioners*, which contains the chapter *Involving Faith Communities*. Consultation with faith groups ranges from informal contact to formal exercises. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit engages with faith communities on an ad-hoc basis and is considering funding a number of faith based organisations. The Social Exclusion Unit has had written consultation with faith groups and has also used the Inner Cities Religious Council as a forum for gaining views from faith perspectives. The Inner Cities Religious Council is chaired by a minister and meets three times a year. Its main focus is on ODPM business, but it is able to consider broader policy issues at the invitation of other Departments.

Examples of Good Practice

Department of Trade and Industry

The Department of Trade and Industry consulted widely and effectively in 2002/03 over detailed proposals and draft regulations for implementing the EU Employment Directive. The standard 13-week consultation period was extended to 18 weeks to compensate for business absences over the Christmas period. The mailing list was developed over time, with organisations who subsequently responded being added. In addition, copies of each of the consultation documents and draft regulations were available on the Departmental website. The relevance of the policy to the faith communities was made clear. There was an excellent response to the consultation: over 3,000 replies in total. Take-up was helped by the press coverage of the negotiations which alerted religious communities to the issue. The Department also found informal discussions with different faith groups and presentations to faith communities very helpful.

Jobcentre Plus: Faith Communities Toolkit

Jobcentre Plus in London, East of England and the South East recently developed a Toolkit to provide Jobcentre Plus employees with information about the main faith communities in the UK. The Toolkit was developed through consultation with faith communities and Jobcentre Plus staff and is part of Jobcentre Plus's work to ensure that its services meet the needs of those they are designed to help.

Jobcentre Plus used a variety of consultation methods. First, it worked with an external project consultant, Faith In London Ltd, which researched and wrote the Faith Communities Toolkit for it. Faith In London also set up an external Steering Group of faith community representatives which met to quality assure the draft Toolkit. 116 faith community representatives completed a Faith In London survey and focus groups were held with Jobcentre Plus staff and faith community representatives prior to Faith In London writing the draft Toolkit. The draft Toolkit was then piloted in Luton and Tower Hamlets. The pilots included awareness training, following which 53 Jobcentre Plus staff commented on the draft. A range of faith communities were visited in order to discuss closer working and to gain comments on the draft Toolkit. Finally, consultation events for faith community representatives were organised in both pilot areas, attracting over 120 delegates. The findings from all these various forms of consultation then informed the final version of the Toolkit prepared by Faith In London.

London Civic Forum

The London Civic Forum (LCF) was created in 2000 after extensive consultation and discussion amongst many sectors and organisations across London. One key issue which emerged was that, both constitutionally and in its work plan, LCF would need to recognise the importance of faith communities across London. Constitutionally this meant that one of the five electoral colleges of LCF, representing all of London's civic society, was allocated to the faith communities. The LCF's work with faith communities includes several examples of good

practice, including assisting the London Development Agency in their attempts to reach the poorer sections of society.

Faith Engagement with London Development Agency (LDA)

The LDA recognised that it needed to find new ways of working if it wished to enable some of the poorest sectors of London society to benefit from economic regeneration. It also recognised that the faith communities could play a key part in this process. It took the view that the only connection that many people on low incomes have with the wider community is through a faith community. Faith communities are trusted where others are not, and faith communities have a long tradition of working with their members and others to enable wider community development.

LCF worked with LDA to devise a new format, called engagement rather than consultation, to indicate some key differences. Firstly, this was perceived as a real two-way conversation with opinions, ideas and information flowing both ways - so that the faith communities were enabled to become more effective in assisting those who they work with and so that the LDA could become more effective in achieving its aims. Secondly, this was seen as an ongoing process, starting with an initial meeting, continuing with a written working document that was able to include others who did not attend the initial meeting, and with more opportunities to meet and engage in the future.

The initial invitations to this process went to the 200 or so local and regional faith organisations who were already members of LCF and to those known to be involved in regeneration work. These organisations passed on the invitation to others so that about a third of the approximately 50 representatives at the initial meeting were new to LCF.

This broadening of the base of involvement was only possible because LCF already had credibility amongst a diverse range of faith community organisations. By including such a diverse grouping - diverse faith traditions, diverse backgrounds, national, regional and local perspectives - LCF was able to bring the LDA into a conversation that could not take place in any other way. The LDA does not always find listening to and engaging with serious and sustained critiques of their current practice a comfortable process, but it is a process to which it is committed as it is only through this engagement that it can improve its work.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

The CPS wanted to produce a Public Policy Statement to explain its policy on prosecuting racist and religious crime. A working group, reporting to the CPS Board, was established. It was chaired by the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Kent, and included experienced CPS prosecutors, CPS policy advisors, and CPS Equality and Diversity officers. The objective of the working group was to produce a public policy statement and supporting practitioner guidance. The guidance would aim to explain the policy and procedure involved in prosecuting these cases to criminal justice partners, communities affected by this sort of offending and the wider public.

The CPS understood that involving communities and individuals affected by racist or religious offending was central to the success of the project. It wanted victims, witnesses and their families, as well as the community at large, to be confident that it understood the serious nature of this type of crime and what the public could expect from the CPS when prosecuting these offences, thereby generating greater confidence in the wider criminal justice system.

The working group developed a draft policy statement and supporting guidance which formed the basis of consultation. It agreed that consultation on the policy statement was needed at a relatively early stage to enable feedback to be considered and the document to be revised and developed as appropriate. It recognised that the groups and individuals likely to have an interest in the policy were many and diverse, ranging from well-established national organisations to local groups dealing with particular issues. A list of people to consult was developed using the experience and knowledge of working group members.

The working group agreed a consultation model that would reach as wide an audience as possible. It wrote to groups and individuals on the consultation list inviting them to participate in the consultation process. Invitees were given the option of attending a National Focus Group in March 2003 as well as providing written comments on the draft Policy statement. In addition, all the CPS regional Equality and Diversity Officers were asked to take the draft policy out to community groups within their regions in an effort to provide as wide an input as possible.

In all, over 120 groups and individuals were consulted and a significant number provided either written feedback or attended the focus group meeting. Examples of the groups consulted included faith groups, local Race Equality Councils, monitoring and advocacy groups. Members of the working group took part in the focus group meeting by introducing the draft policy and participating in the ensuing discussions.

Following the focus group, regional consultations and written responses, all the outputs were considered and a programme of significant redrafting took place. To assist this process, a number of the people who had taken part in the consultation were invited to join the working group to provide a continuing critical input.

Following the national launch and publication of the guidance, the CPS Areas were encouraged to promote the policy widely amongst partners and within the local community. A number of local events were held to facilitate this. Areas continue to promote the policy through established community links and local criminal justice partnerships. The policy will be reviewed in due course.

Department for Education and Skills (DFES)

The DFES has a dedicated Consultation Unit that provides advice and practical help to policy teams, helping them to comply with the criteria outlined in the Cabinet Office Code of Practice. The Communications Unit has a standard list of consultee organisations which includes several faith bodies. Policy teams modify the list according to requirements. In addition to the formal distribution, all consultation documents appear on the DfES website and any individual or organisation may respond. The time allowed for consultations is generally two to three months.

The DFES consults widely with faith communities on policy issues. Face to face meetings with faith groups are carried out at all levels:

- The Secretary of State recently hosted a faith seminar which included representatives from the Christian Churches (Anglicans, Roman Catholic, Free Churches and Seventh Day Adventists), Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists. All of these groups are currently working with the Department on developing a non-statutory national framework for RE.
- The Departmental Faith Schools team attends meetings twice a year with representatives of several faith groups that provide state schools. The team also meets individual 'minority' promoters setting up faith schools to help them through the process.
- Other teams hold meetings with appropriate faith organisations on an ad hoc basis. For example, for the Education Bill 2002 discussions were held on particular issues around governance of school federations, school admission policies and Religious Education.

Her Majesty's Prison Service

The Prison Service engages with faith communities through the Prison Service Chaplaincy Council. This is made up of representatives from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Sikh faith communities. The Council meets six times a year and provides a forum for consultation on a broad range of prison issues.

The Council has been closely involved in work to ensure that the faith needs of prisoners are met as fully as possible. It also enables broader policy issues to be looked at from a faith perspective, e.g. the provision of specific items to be stocked in prison shops and the policy on testing prisoners for drugs and alcohol. Over the coming months, the Council will be invited to look at the role that faith communities can play in the resettlement of offenders, looking at such areas as Community Chaplaincy schemes.

The Chaplain General also has twice yearly bilateral meetings with each of the Faith Advisers to discuss specific issues in more detail. Where faith groups are not represented on the Chaplaincy Council because prisoner numbers are small, the Prison Service is working to identify appropriate points of contact and has held meetings with a number of groups (e.g. Pagans and Rastafarians).

About 8,000 prisoners (11%) come from a faith other than Christianity. Just over 6,000 (8.5%) are Muslims. All prisons appoint Chaplains from a range of faith traditions, depending on the specific needs and population of the prison. The Chaplaincy HQ Team includes a full time Muslim Adviser, and a number of full time Imams have been employed by prisons. The Chaplaincy held its first National Conference for Chaplains of all faith traditions in 2003. This was attended by some 450 delegates as well as the then Prisons Minister and the Director General, and was endorsed by the Prime Minister.

The Prison Service has been taking forward a major programme of work over the last few years to develop multi faith provision, including a more inclusive approach to Chaplaincy, to ensure the faith needs of prisoners are met. The Faith Advisers have played an essential role in this work.

Membership and Terms of Reference of Steering Group and membership of Panel of Advisers and Working Group

Steering Group

Chair

Fiona Mactaggart MP (HO Minister for Race Equality, Community Policy & Civic Renewal)

Secretary

Mark Carroll (Director, Race, Cohesion, Equality & Faith, Home Office Communities Group)
Alternated with: Godfrey Stadlen (Head of Faith Communities Unit, Home Office)

Assistant Secretary

Warwick Hawkins (Faith Communities Unit, Home Office)

Yvette Cooper MP (Minister in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Chair of Inner Cities Religious Council)

Lord Filkin (Department for Constitutional Affairs Minister)

Ruth Kelly MP (HM Treasury Minister)

Estelle Morris MP (Department for Culture, Media and Sport Minister)

Jacqui Smith MP (Department for Trade and Industry Minister, responsible for Commission for Equality and Human Rights)

Stephen Twigg MP (Department for Education and Skills Minister)

John Battle MP (Prime Minister's Faith Envoy)

William Chapman (No.10)

Cllr Laura Willoughby (Chair of Local Government Association Equalities Executive)

Rosalind Preston OBE (Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK)

Rev Joel Edwards (General Director, Evangelical Alliance)

Bimal Krishna das (Secretary, National Council of Hindu Temples)

Hon Barney Leith (Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the UK)

Sarah Lindsell (Roman Catholic; Director of Caritas Social Action)

Baroness Kathleen Richardson (Free Churches; Moderator, Churches' Commission on Inter Faith Relations)

Prof Jonathan Sacks (Chief Rabbi)

Iqbal Sacranie OBE (Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain)

Indarjit Singh OBE (Director, Network of Sikh Organisations)

The Rt Rev'd Tim Stevens (Anglican Bishop of Leicester)

Terms of Reference

- i) To consider the most effective means of achieving greater involvement of the faith communities in policy-making and delivery across Whitehall;
- ii) To identify the specific policy areas where this input would be most valuable;
- iii) To oversee the agenda of the Working Group, and comment on and monitor its work; and
- iv) To agree a report and recommendations by end December 2003.

Panel of Advisers

David Rayner (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of Inner Cities Religious Council)

Fraser Wheeler (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

Martin Fuller (Ministry of Defence)

Amy Ward (Department for Culture, Media and Sport)

Yvonne Fell (Department for Trade and Industry)

Elisabeth Al-Khalifa (Department of Health)

Paul Spray (Department for International Development)

Caroline Smith (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)

Dr Barbara Burford (Department for Work and Pensions)

Yvonne Strachan (Scottish Executive)

Yasmin Hussein (Welsh Assembly)

Brian Pearce OBE (Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK)

Peter Smith (Local Government Association)

Canon Michael Ipgrave (Secretary, Churches' Commission on Inter Faith Relations)

Rev'd John Kennedy (Churches Together in Britain & Ireland)

Tim Livesey (Archbishop of Westminster's Principal Adviser for Public Affairs)

Dr Zaki Badawi OBE (Principal, Muslim College)

Yusuf Al-Khoei (President, Al-Khoei Foundation)

Anil Bhanot (Hindu Council UK)

Neville Nagler (Director General, Board of Deputies of British Jews)

Rabbi Tony Bayfield (Reformed Synagogues)

Working Group

Chair

Godfrey Stadlen (Head of Faith Communities Unit, Home Office)

Secretary

Warwick Hawkins (Faith Communities Unit, Home Office⁶)

Rev'd Canon Michael Ipgrave (Secretary, Churches' Commission on Inter-Faith Relations)

Mark Sturge (African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance)

Mrs Unaiza Malik (Muslim Council of Britain)

Neville Nagler (Director General, Board of Deputies of British Jews & member of ICRC)

Paul Seto (Director, The Buddhist Society)

Dr Indarjit Singh OBE (Director, Network of Sikh Organisations (UK) & member of ICRC)

Ishwer Tailor (President, Gujarat Hindu Society (Preston) & member of ICRC)

Brian Pearce OBE (Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK)

Mockbul Ali (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

Michelle Crerar (HM Prison Service)

Jan Crompton (Department for Education and Skills)

Janet Hawkes (Department for Constitutional Affairs)

David Rayner (Secretary, Inner Cities Religious Council, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)

Cathy Rees (Department of Trade and Industry)

6 also representing Department for Culture, Media & Sport



Websites providing statistical data on faith

Religion in Britain:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=293>

Religion in local authorities in England and Wales (scroll to Page 79):

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/census2001/KS_LA_E&W_part1.pdf

Religious affiliation broken down according to ethnicity:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=460>



Final report of the Leeds Pilot Project: Chapters 1 to 3

These chapters relate to the effectiveness of different consultative methods and are of direct relevance to this Report. The full report of the Pilot, containing detailed findings on the substance of the policy area under consideration (sentencing policy and the rehabilitation of offenders), is available from the Faith Communities Unit.

Chapter 1: Objectives and team

This consultation exercise and research study on faith communities, criminal justice and the rehabilitation of ex-offenders was commissioned by the Home Office and managed by Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum through the office of Leeds Church Institute. It ran part-time in two phases from 20 October 2003 to 21 November (when an interim report was presented) and then to 31 January 2004.

The research was carried out by Professor Kim Knott and Mr Matthew Francis of the Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds in association with members of the Community Chaplaincy Project of HM Prison Leeds and council members of Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum.

The two objectives of the project were as follows:

- (a) to conduct a time-limited local faiths consultation exercise in Leeds to examine the effectiveness of local faith, interfaith and other relevant bodies, networks and mechanisms for the gathering of views on an aspect of Government policy and practice;
- (b) to gather, analyse and present data on (i) the attitudes of faith communities to the rehabilitation of young male offenders (and to a lesser extent to the sentencing of offenders), and (ii) the role of faith communities in their support.

In the remainder of this report we shall describe the research process and methods we used (see also appendices) before presenting and evaluating the project findings with reference to these twin objectives.

Chapter 2: Research process and methods

In our initial research proposal we identified a number of potential consultative channels to be used in the gathering of views on the role of faith communities in criminal justice and rehabilitation.

- (a) A questionnaire to local faith representative bodies;
- (b) A telephone-based survey;
- (c) An e-mail survey;
- (d) Focus groups (some organised independently, others arranged to fit in with pre-existing meeting schedules and agendas);

- (e) A request to existing networks, both inter faith and single faith, 'to consult internally and provide responses in an agreed format and within an agreed timescale';
- (f) Telephone or e-mail interviews with relevant professionals and representatives of comparable inter faith bodies nationally and in other localities (as a means of evaluating structures and mechanisms internal to the locality);
- (g) If time allowed, a local conference or seminar on the subject of rehabilitation and the role of faith communities;
- (h) If permission could be obtained and the appropriate confidentiality assured within the time-frame, interviews with prisoners or ex-offenders.

Most of these methods of consultation were employed, with the emphasis being on (a), (d), (f) and (h).

The research process began with initial briefing meetings between members of the research team with the Community Chaplaincy Project (CCP) Steering Group and the Council of Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum (LFCLF).¹ The first draft of a self-completion questionnaire for circulation to faith representative bodies was also discussed. Following amendments, a postal mailing of the revised questionnaire (with SAE and deadline for response) took place. Fifty bodies were contacted (including all the places of worship in Leeds for Muslims, Sikhs, Jews and Hindus, the Christian churches in two Leeds districts, and contact addresses for all Buddhist groups and for Bahá'ís). The same questionnaire was included in electronic and postal mailings to LFCLF council members and subsidiary contacts. In the weeks that followed it was also distributed to those with an interest in inter faith or multi faith issues (via focus groups and meetings) and at a Muslim discussion group.

Over the same period, a second questionnaire was designed for completion by male offenders (mostly under 30 years of age) at HMP Leeds. A pilot exercise was run (with 12 completions) before amendments were made. A third questionnaire, for circulation to a dozen members of the Working Group of the Community Chaplaincy Project, including chaplains themselves, was also devised and circulated.

Four focus groups were held as follows: with members of an inter faith group, Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship (12 November), with the Chaplaincy legal justice group, with a mixed group of fifteen prison workers and those working in a voluntary capacity with offenders (18 November), with Council members of LFCLF (15 December) and with prisoners and Chaplaincy staff (15 December). Different issues relating to the research provided the focus for these group meetings.

Ten interviews were conducted in January following the return of questionnaires. These were with members of faith communities under-represented in responses to the questionnaire, with people working with ex-offenders, and with offenders at HM Prison, Leeds. Contact was

- 1 Steering Group members include David Randolph-Horn (Secretary, Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum; Acting Director, Leeds Church Institute), Peter Tarleton (HM Prison, Co-ordinator Chaplain), Maureen Browell (Diocese of Ripon and Leeds, Social Responsibility Officer), Khalil Ahmed Kazi (HM Prison Community Chaplaincy Project Officer), Hardip Singh Ahluwallia (HM Prison, Sikh Chaplain; Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum) and Shahid Anwar (Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum).
- 2 Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray (University of Cardiff, researcher on a previous project involving prison chaplaincy in a multi-faith context at the University of Warwick), Stuart Dew (Churches Criminal Justice Forum).

made by telephone or face to face with appropriate experts outside Leeds on substantive and academic issues related to the project.²

Taking all these channels of communication into account, the following faith communities were contacted: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Bahá'í, Pagan, Christian Scientist. Various denominations and groupings within each of these broader communities were contacted. For example, the following Christian denominations were approached: Church of England, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed, Leeds Ecumenical Partnership, Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) and Leeds Black majority churches. In the case of most of these communities, broad networks as well as individual places of worship received invitations to respond.

On 20 January a consultative seminar was held in Leeds Civic Hall at which the findings of the research were presented and a discussion on the issues of faith communities, criminal justice and rehabilitation took place. About forty people from various communities attended.

Chapter 3: The consultation exercise - an evaluation

One of the two objectives of the research was to consult with faith communities in Leeds (on matters relating to criminal justice and the rehabilitation of offenders) and to evaluate that consultation process.

Leeds is a city of three quarters of a million people (and is at the centre of a large metropolitan district). Its population is multi-ethnic and multi-religious. The Census data from 2001 showed that, in terms of the relative size of its religious groups, Leeds closely resembled the national picture.

Leeds population by religion, 2001 Census

Christian:	492,656
Buddhist:	1,587
Hindu:	4,183
Jewish:	8,267
Muslim:	21,394
Sikh:	7,586
Other:	1,530
No religion:	120,139
Religion not stated:	58,060

The faith communities in Leeds are internally organised, some only at local level by place of worship (e.g. Hindus), but most at a higher level by representative bodies or forums (e.g. Leeds Jewish Representative Council, Leeds Muslim Forum and Leeds Buddhist Forum). The Christian denominations are both self-sufficient in terms of organisation, but also contribute ecumenically to neighbourhood Churches Together bodies. Leeds is also home to the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber and Leeds Church Institute. In terms of multi faith representation and activity, it is Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum that links the city's communities and represents their interests to Leeds City Council and other local agencies. The LFCLF was first developed in the late 1990s and its council was

formally launched by the Lord Mayor in 2001. Leeds has also had an interfaith dialogue group since 1976, the Concord Interfaith Fellowship. Whilst Concord is a membership group that individuals join, the LFCLF is a collection of organisations, and membership is open only to groups.

The issues of consultation and representation in relation to faith communities, whether locally, regionally or nationally, are complex.³ Particular factors that need to be taken into account are (a) those relating to the structure of local faith communities and the means by which they communicate internally and externally, and (b) practical matters relating to the nature and extent of the roles and responsibilities of those consulted, language, timing, approach and consultation overload. In a recent survey by the Inter Faith Network for the UK on local inter faith activity, the authors suggest that those wishing to consult faith communities sometimes employ unrealistic and impractical deadlines, and are often unaware of the practical difficulties experienced by many religious organisations that have no paid secretarial or administrative staff.

Although the project team were aware of many of these issues at the outset of the research, the aim was to test various consultation channels for their effectiveness, not to limit the exercise to those we knew already to be effective. In many ways, the results of this exercise (see below) have further highlighted the difficulties identified by the Inter Faith Network and other researchers with experience of consulting faith communities.⁴

It is the view of the team that the most effective method of consultation was the focus group. In one case this was usefully combined with the distribution of self-completion questionnaires, and in another with the identification of individuals for interview. This method will be discussed in more detail below. The least effective would seem to be the postal survey method. Forty two per cent (42%) of all the questionnaires distributed to members of faith communities were returned in total. However, those attending the inter faith focus group - who were handed the questionnaire in person - provided the best response rate (75%), with the survey of faith representative bodies (via places of worship) yielding a lower response rate (28%).

3 See Kim Knott, Sean McLoughlin and Melanie Prideaux, Final Report, *The Feasibility of a Regional Faith Forum for Yorkshire and the Humber*, (Community Religions Project, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly and Churches Regional Commission, 2003), and The Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, *Local Interfaith Activity in the UK: A Survey* (The Inter Faith Network for the UK, 2003).

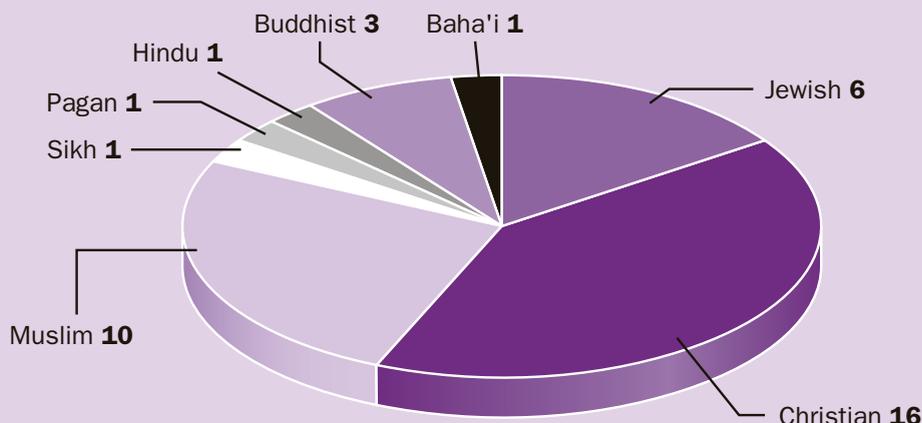
4 e.g. Researchers at the University of Derby who undertook research on religious discrimination for the Home Office, see Paul Weller, Alice Feldman and Kingsley Purdam, *Religious Discrimination in England and Wales: Home Office Research Study 220*, (Home Office, 2001).

Focusing on the survey of faith communities first, if we combine the three survey routes - faith representative bodies, council members of LFCLF (who are link persons for faith networks), and members of the Concord Interfaith Fellowship - the following responses were received:

Distribution and return of questionnaires by faith community

Faith community	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires returned
Christian (inc. Quaker):	37	16
Muslim:	18	10
Jewish:	12	6
Sikh:	9	1
Buddhist:	7	3
Hindu:	4	1
Bahá'í:	2	1
Pagan:	1	1
Religion not known:	2	0
Total	93	39

Faith community respondents by religion⁵



This shows the total number of returns, and the rate of return by faith community (with a rate of 50% or above for Christians, Muslims and Jews). The level of response from Muslims is explained by the lead taken by a Muslim Council member of the LFCLF in distributing and gathering returns. The low return from the Sikh community was compensated in the later stages of the project by an interview.

A variety of factors need to be borne in mind in considering the differential rate of response of faith communities to the survey. These include whom the letter or e-mail is addressed to (their role and status within the community, their English language competence etc), the policy concerning issues of representation and consultation within the community, the extent of knowledge about or interest in the subject matter, concerns about confidentiality and how

5 The total for Christian responses in the pie chart includes one Christian Scientist.

responses will be used, the timing of the request (e.g. with regard to the religious calendar, in this case Ramadan), and the voluntary or professional capacity of the representative and the pressures upon them. It should also be remembered that it is not uncommon for many questionnaires to arrive by post leading to 'survey fatigue' for some faith leaders and secretaries of religious trusts and management committees.

Although the impersonal postal method was of limited effectiveness, inter faith and multi faith groups and networks proved to be useful vehicles for the distribution of questionnaires to members of faith communities. This is explained by the mixed composition of such groups, the commitment of their members to faith-related activities including research, and the role and experience that many have of linking into their own faith communities. Indeed, the most successful route to questionnaire completion was distribution via the inter faith focus group. In our opinion, there are several reasons for this which include the age, class and status of group members, the focus on 'Punishment' in the discussion that preceded questionnaire distribution, and the direct appeal of the project team to individuals within the group.

In addition to surveying the views of members of faith communities, we questioned members of the Community Chaplaincy Project at HM Prison Leeds on comparable issues, and prisoners themselves, using two different questionnaires. A good rate of return was obtained from CCP team members (7 out of 12). This was to be expected given the relevance of the questions to their work. The rate of return was also good for the questionnaire distributed to prisoners (64%).

Number of inmates and prison respondents by religion (21 Dec 2003)

Faith community	Number of Respondents	Number of Inmates
Atheist:	-	2
Baptist:	-	1
Buddhist:	2	5
Church of England:	24	506
Church of Scotland:	-	3
Ethiopian Orthodox:	-	1
Hindu /Jain:	2	1
Methodist:	-	4
Muslim:	3	112
Black Muslim:	1	1
Nil/No Religion:	5	412
Other Christian:	-	5
Orthodox (Greek/Russian):	-	1
Protestant:	-	1
Rastafarian:	2	2
Roman Catholic:	18	179
Seventh Day Adventist:	1	1
Sikh:	-	4
Total	58	1244

The religious allegiance of the prisoners who responded to the questionnaire is shown in the above table, alongside the number of inmates by religious identity for 21 December 2003. This shows a reasonable ratio of respondents to inmates by religion.

Moving now to the focus groups themselves, we consider these to have been highly successful in obtaining a range of views about faith-based attitudes to offending, punishment, sentencing, retribution, forgiveness, and rehabilitation. As a method the focus group has value in allowing for fairly free exchange of views on a given subject, often guided by a researcher.

Focus groups may be made up of people who are knowledgeable and interested in the subject to be discussed or those less well informed. Of the groups we organised, two were composed of people with an active interest in the issues (professionals and volunteers, and prisoners themselves); two were made up of those with a deep commitment to faith and multi faith matters but less formal knowledge (in most cases) of issues relating to justice and rehabilitation. In-depth reflection on the issues was achieved in this approach, and key words and phrases emerged that would not have been used in the completion of the questionnaire (which contained a majority of closed questions requiring fixed responses).

In the four focus groups held, different perspectives emerged, some specific to particular religions, but more often shared across religious boundaries. Relevant information was also forthcoming, particularly from the criminal/legal focus group, on existing initiatives undertaken by faith communities in relation to the rehabilitation of offenders.

We conducted ten semi-structured interviews during the research period as a subsidiary rather than a primary method of data collection. Interviews with key informants are an invaluable addition to the other methods used here in adding precision and depth to the findings. We also used interviews as a means of 'filling gaps' in our profile of responses from faith communities (we chose to interview a Sikh and a Black Christian as we thought we had insufficient responses from these groups).

Although interviewing is the major qualitative method for gathering data on opinions and attitudes (e.g. on restorative justice and the role of faith communities in rehabilitation), it is time consuming. Given the time-limited nature of this consultation exercise, we decided to use this method in the later stages of the project to fill gaps that had emerged and to target those with a specific interest or knowledge. As a result of the limited role that interviews played in the consultation exercise, there is little further to add about their effectiveness suffice it to say that, in a project with a longer time-scale, we would have made more use of them.

In conclusion, in a time-limited study directed at consulting faith communities, we would advocate the use of targeted focus groups as a primary method, with the associated distribution of questionnaires to focus group members (and by them to others in their communities). The use of existing networks and organisations, such as Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum, the Concord Interfaith Fellowship, and the Community Chaplaincy Project team, was invaluable in facilitating the identification of groups suitable for this focused approach, and of individuals for interview.

Those wishing to consult faith communities should consider carefully the time frame for consultation as well as the methods to be employed. Awareness of differences between faith communities - in terms of internal structure, leadership, paid and voluntary roles, language etc - is important for understanding differential rates of response and (apparent) levels of interest. It is likely that effective faith consultation, whether locally, regionally or nationally, depends to a considerable extent on the presence of multi faith bodies which are able to demonstrate good links to grass roots level with local faith communities. Examples of such bodies include Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum (at local level), the emerging regional faith forums (e.g. South East England Faith Forum), and the Inter Faith Network for the UK at national level. Support for and development of such bodies will be important for enabling local and national government to consult faith communities fairly and effectively.

