

Priceless, Unmeasurable?

*Faiths and Community Development
in 21st Century England*

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Contexts

In 2006 a partnership of the Faith Based Regeneration Network (FbRN), the Faiths and Civil Society Unit at Anglia Ruskin University, the Churches' Community Work Alliance (CCWA) and the Community Development Exchange (CDX), came together to consider the role of faiths in community development.

This interest reflects the growing recognition amongst policy makers and non-faith based practitioners of the strong presence of faiths in communities. Traditionally they have provided services, support and fellowship, often in the most 'hard to reach' places where they might be one of the few remaining agencies and doing work which many others would not or could not do. Yet the nature of this contribution is little understood.

At the same time, the policy contexts within which faiths operate have been extended sharply over the last fifteen years and this has been particularly the case since 1997. New opportunities for building capacity, engaging in new forms of governance and for influencing strategies and development have meant that the variety and range of the work of faiths in communities has extended still further. Again, these developments have been little analysed or reflected upon.

This 'Faith and Community Development' programme is a response to these contexts. It has sought to work with people of faith to build up an understanding of faith based community development across England. What do faiths do? What is the scale of their contribution? What impacts does this contribution have?

At the same time we recognise that faith based community development, like any community endeavour, is not always straightforward or easy. We have asked, what does it need in order to flourish? What are the challenges it faces, as well as the opportunities?

Finally we have sought to use this thinking to ask what is distinctive about faith based community development in particular? What does the faith dimension add?

In doing so, we hope to demonstrate the value of faiths in community development. We find that it is often difficult precisely to 'measure', as is the wont of policy makers and funders today. At the same time, we find a great deal of evidence of the economic value of the faiths contribution and also of the human value which is 'unmeasurable' by some government standards, but also 'priceless' by the standards of human experience. We also know that other sectors with whom faiths increasingly work have varying understandings of faith based engagement and we hope that this report will support a better engagement between faiths and their non-faith partners by identifying this 'added value'.

This report is intended, therefore, for:

- Policy makers
- Non-faith based community development actors
- Faith communities themselves

This report is one outcome of the project. The other is a 'kit' to support others in doing faith based community development. This should be of interest to faith groups, policy makers and anyone who thinks they may want to work in partnership with faith groups.

What is Community Development?

In thinking about faith groups and community development, we have made use of a working definition of community development. This draws on the National Occupational Standards for Community Development.¹

Since the first National Occupational Standards were produced in 1997, participation in community development, community involvement and working in partnership have become central elements in many government policy initiatives. However, the words are often not reflected or even understood in practice.

The Standards were revised in 2002. They contain the skills and knowledge that community development workers and activists need to do the work. They provide the basis from which to promote effective and appropriate community development work practice across the UK. The Standards were developed by the Community Work Forum (CWF). The CWF involves employers, trade unions, training providers and practitioners from across the UK. The Standards were 'administered' by Paulo – the National Training Organisation for community development work and are now under the wing of Lifelong Learning UK.²

It has been suggested that the values of community development work are strongly related to the values held by members of diverse faith traditions, communities and faith-based organisations.

“Faith-based community development is a way of empowering communities to work for change. It springs from a holistic view of the community, which values and dignifies everyone. It focuses particularly on disadvantaged and excluded communities and groups, enabling people to develop skills and confidence, and participate actively in bringing about change.”³

¹ source: Churches' Community Work Alliance and FbRN Briefing, 2006

² The full standards are available on-line at www.paulo.org.uk or from www.fcdl.org.uk or can be obtained on a CD-ROM from these organisations. Please ring +44 (0) 114 273 9391.

³ Tools for Regeneration, FbRN, 2nd Ed, 2006.

For some faith-based organisations, this affinity with community development will be embodied in formal structures. The United Reformed Church has adopted Church Related Community Workers (CRCW) Core Competencies, which include the National Occupational Standards, as the appropriate standards that a URC CRCW should aim to acquire via her or his initial training. Many other faith-based organisations will not wish to go down this formal route but will nevertheless wish to learn from and utilise the Standards. It is argued by some that work is only community development where it adheres in part at least to the Standards, though this is debated.

The Standards can be used to define and argue for what good community development practice and learning should consist of. The Standards can be used to inform:

- the development of partnerships and participation initiatives;
- training and learning programmes;
- action plans;
- terms of reference;
- job descriptions;
- community development work practice in different settings:
 - e.g. health, regeneration, rural areas and at different levels:
 - e.g. grass-roots work, managing a project, evaluating practice;
 - explanations of what community development is.

These outline the basic values and principles for good community development work practice. The values that underpin the Standards are:

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Working towards a fairer society which respects civil and human rights and challenges oppression.

SELF-DETERMINATION

Individuals and groups have the right to identify shared issues and concerns as the starting point for collective action.

WORKING & LEARNING TOGETHER

Valuing and using the skills, knowledge, experience and diversity within communities to collectively bring about desired changes.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Empowering communities to develop their independence and autonomy whilst making and maintaining links to the wider society.

PARTICIPATION

Everyone has the right to fully participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Effective community development is informed and enhanced through reflection on action.

The key purpose of community development work, therefore, is collectively to bring about social change and justice, by working with communities to:

- identify their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities;
- plan, organise and take action;
- evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the action;
- ...and to do all these in ways which challenge oppression and tackle inequalities.

Methods and Approaches

In thinking about faiths and community development, we have identified two key areas of importance:

- What do faith communities DO?
- What do they ADD?

We also ask what do they NEED?

In keeping with community development principles and values, we used an approach which starts with the views and experiences of people who are doing faith based community development.

This has involved two key methods, workshops and reviews of mappings and reports of faith based activities.

Workshops

The first has been a series of one day workshops across England. These have taken place in:

- Cambridge
- Coventry
- London
- Manchester
- Middlesbrough
- Newcastle upon Tyne

The workshops included two parts. A morning session introduced the idea of community development generally and went on to present local and regional case studies of faith based community development specifically.

An afternoon session built on this by facilitating group discussions around a number of key questions:

- What is the faith based vision for community development?
- Who participates and who is represented?
- Who are the 'leaders' and what role do they play?
- How do faith groups reflect and evaluate?
- What are the issues around funding?
- What obstacles do we need to overcome?

These discussions made use of a 'café dialogue' approach whereby tables are set up around the room to resemble a café, with refreshments available. Each table represents one of the questions and participants are encouraged to record their discussions on the tablecloths in a relatively informal atmosphere. At regular intervals, participants move to a new table, with a new mix of people, and discuss that table's question. This is intended to promote a wide variety of discussion in several 'mixes'.

Review of Mappings and Reports of Faith Based Activities

The second approach has been a review of sources of information about faith based community development activities across England. We know that there is a considerable body of research and reporting about faith based community development. Much of this is regional and we took this as our starting point for a review.

The review consists of two key elements:

- A review of published reports and accounts of faith based community activity. These have been used to identify key types of activities which are undertaken.
- Interviews and email contributions to build 'stories' of faith based community activity in each of the English regions. These have been used to identify trends and themes in faith based community activity nationally.

It is important to note that this review is not intended to be a 'mapping' of faith based community activity. In many areas this work has already been done and to repeat and extend this task nationally is beyond the remit of this project. (A bibliography of sources is, however, included at the end). Rather, the purpose is to use a review of existing material and indicative interviews to identify the main trends, themes and issues in faith based community development across England as a whole.

What Faith Communities Do

Our review indicates starkly that faith communities do a lot!

This is striking across England where in each of the nine regions there has been some sort of mapping activity to identify what faith groups are doing. In some regions this has been extensive.

Thus in the South East, *Beyond Belief* (March 2004) claims that there are at least two community action projects for each faith centre in the region. In the East, *Faith in the East of England* (July 2005) identifies 180,000 beneficiaries of faith based community development. In London, *Neighbourhood Renewal in London: the role of faith communities* (May 2002) identifies 7000 projects and 2200 faith buildings. In the West Midlands, *Believing in the Region* (May 2006) reports that 80% of faith groups deliver some kind of service to the wider community. In the North West, *Faith in England's North West* (November 2003) shows that faith communities are running more than 5000 social action projects and that faith communities are generating income of £69m – £94m per annum.

In Yorkshire and the Humber, *Count Us In* (2000) shows that in Hull 90% of churches are involved in social action and *Angels and Advocates* (November 2002) reports that there are 6500 social action projects in churches. In the South West, *Faith in Action* (June 2006) demonstrates that 165,000 people are supported by faith groups in the region by 4762 activities. In the East Midlands, *Faith in Derbyshire* (May 2006) claims that, on average, churches run nine community activities.

These research activities can be characterised in the following four ways:

Region-wide mappings

Some of the sources are region wide 'mapping' exercises. These are general overviews of faith based community activity corresponding to recognised regional governance areas. Of nine regions in England, seven have conducted regional reviews (London, East of England, North West, North East, West Midlands, South West and Yorkshire and the Humber). Only the South East and the East Midlands have not done so on a region wide basis, though there is material relating to each of these at the sub-regional level.

City/town specific mappings

In each region there are considerable resources which map and examine faith based community activity in specific towns and smaller areas within the regions. (These are listed in the bibliography in this report).

Surveys focusing on particular issues

for example neighbourhood renewal and regeneration, faith buildings, social action and culture (also listed in the bibliography to this report).

Faith tradition-specific surveys, mappings or reports

In a number of cases specific faith communities have conducted research and 'mapping' exercises addressing their own particular contribution and role. For example these have been conducted by Anglican and Catholic dioceses and by a coalition of black majority churches.

The scale and range of the Faith Based contribution

The types of activities which faith communities are engaged in is broad. Our review of published research into faith based activities identifies engagement in at least the following 48 categories⁴. The list (right) represents every category which appears in the wide range of publications and sources reviewed and is for that reason in some ways repetitive:

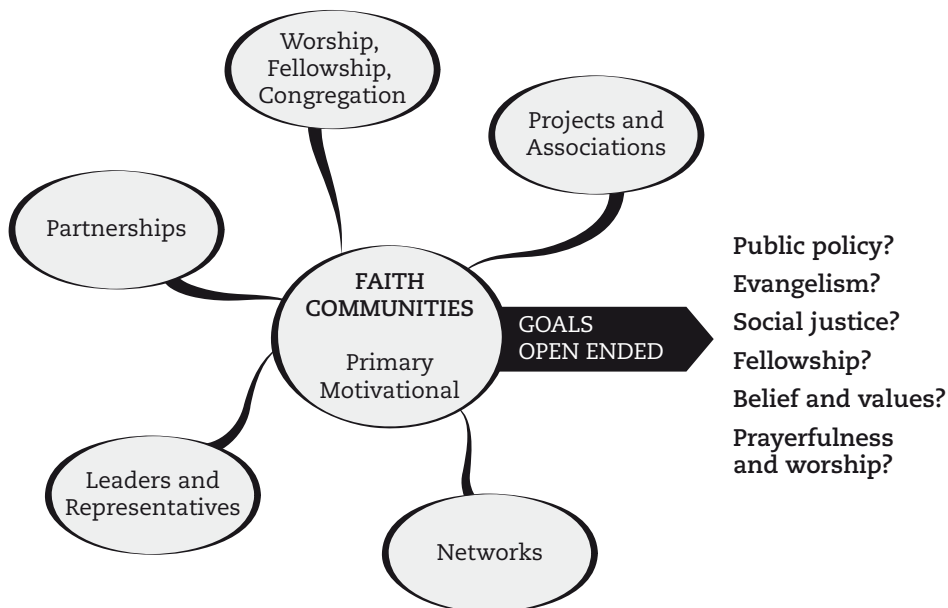
⁴ It is probable that these are collapsible into a smaller number of categories overall and we hope that this report can inform a wider conversation about 'standardising' such definitions nationally as part of the development of faith based frameworks which are more readily engageable with

Categories of Faith Based Engagement in England

Advice and counselling	Health
Alcohol abuse	Health & Fitness
Anti-Racism	Health & sport
Arts & Music	Homelessness & deprivation
Cafés and drop-ins	Housing
Campaigning	Local forums of faith
Child related	Local issues
Children, young people and families	Lunch clubs & coffee mornings
Community support (credit unions, drop-ins, counselling, education, drugs, homelessness, crime prevention, ex-offenders)	Meeting places
Crime Prevention	Neighbourhood projects
Disability	Older people
Drug abuse	Partnerships (services)
Economics/shops/sales	Partnerships (strategic)
Education & training	Refugees
Employment & training	Religious based groups
Employment/social enterprise	Social activities
Enterprise	Social capital
Environment	Social enterprise
Faith buildings	Substance abuse
Family support	Support groups (prison/hospital)
Finance, debt counselling	Support network
Governance	Uniformed
Hard to reach groups	Vulnerable groups
	Women
	Young people

Understanding the nature and implications of this range of engagements is key to identifying the contribution that faiths make in community development. It is also an important basis for identifying what is needed to support faith communities in doing this kind of work.

At present there are few tools available for organising our understandings of faith based activity. We know that faiths are working in a range of areas, especially in relation to civil renewal (see Lowndes and Chapman 2006) but they are also active more widely and a broader tool for ‘typologising’ faith based activity is therefore necessary. One such tool is a ‘faith-centric’ view of faith based community activity such as the one described in a version of a model devised by Dinham and Lowndes 2007 which we use here to identify the predominant ‘types’ which might be found.⁵



This model indicates five key ways in which faith communities might engage in communities: as partners with other faiths and secular agencies; as leaders and representatives of their faith communities in non-faith focused settings; in networks; within their congregations; and in projects and associations in the wider community. Another way of describing this is as follows:

- Faiths in projects (partnerships, projects and associations more widely)
- Faiths in fellowship (within congregations, in networks)
- Faiths in strategies (partnerships, networks)
- Faiths in governance (leaders and representatives)

⁵ This is a working model presented at an ESRC seminar at Anglia Ruskin University, UK, on January 27th 2007. Further iterations of this model are in development.

We use this model and these ideas as a basis for discussion of the trends and themes nationally in the conclusion of this report. To anticipate that, it seems clear from our analysis that **most faith based community activity takes place through projects and associations and that the majority of these are orientated towards the wider community and not confined only to the faith group itself.**

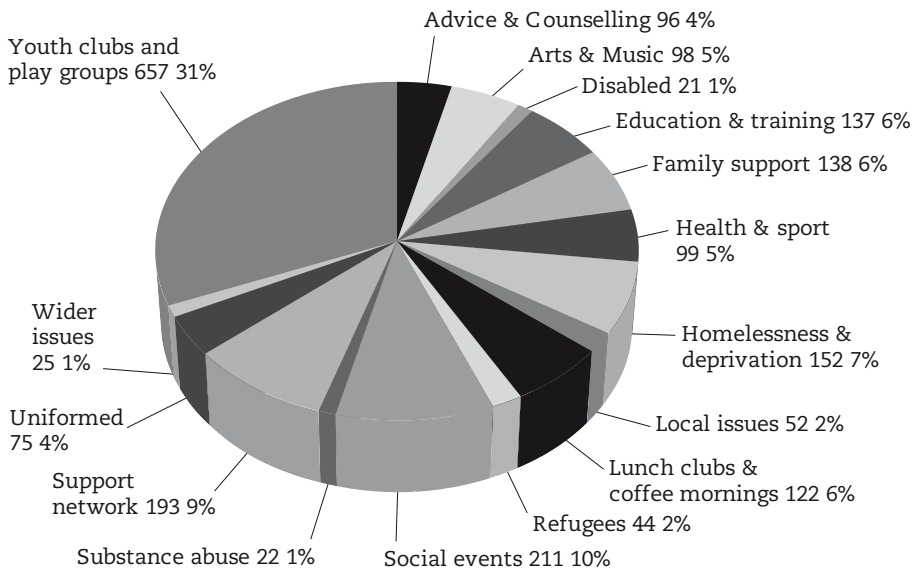
We begin our analysis with a presentation of the findings, as follows:

Faith Based Activities

Published research across the UK indicates that faith based activities take place across a range of types. At the same time, our interviews across England also provide something of the character of this engagement more widely. In the following section we report on the key findings of our review. This starts with a 'region by region' discussion which forms the basis of a wider discussion of trends and themes nationally⁶.

We begin with **London**. This 'region' presents particular issues methodologically because it contains a large number and variety of governance structures and frameworks, each with corresponding funding priorities and arrangements.

Categories of Faith Based Projects, London



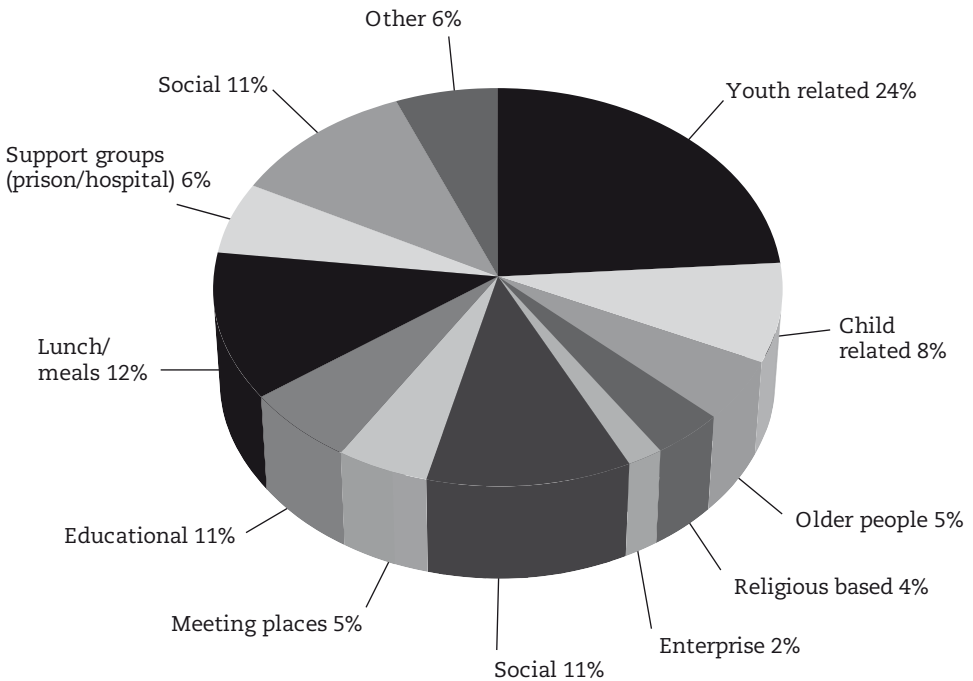
⁶ It should be noted that the data on which the following charts are based have been collected using differing methodologies in each region. Therefore the data provided are slightly different in each case. In every case the proportion of category activity is expressed as a percentage of total activity. Where data are available, this is also expressed as actual numbers of projects identified. It should also be noted that data are not available for all English regions. Where data are available it is reported below.

This has meant that research and strategies are particularly complex and difficult to ‘read’. However, the Regenerating London⁷ report provides useful data leading to our production of the chart (previous page)

The proportions in London indicate a predominance of children and youth orientated projects in the London region (31%). The only other category of more than 10% is ‘social events’, which is a somewhat generic category and is likely to refer to a relatively wide range of activities including lunch clubs, befriending schemes and cultural events. The remainder of activity is spread fairly evenly amongst a wide range of other projects, of which no particular category stands out numerically. At the same time, the overall range of projects falls predominantly into ‘project’ type activities with less evidence of strategic or governance type activity.

At the same time, we know that there has been considerable activity in London to build a pan-London faiths forum, though this is highly complex given the diversity and governance complexity of the city.

Categories of Faith Based Projects, West Midlands



⁷ Regenerating London: the role of faith communities (May 2002) Greater London Enterprise and London Churches Group

Similarly in the **West Midlands**, there appears to be a preponderance of youth related work and this is augmented by a wide range of other 'project' focused activities⁸.

At the same time, we know from interviews in the region that there is a West Midlands Faiths Forum which operates at more strategic levels. It is looking at different ways of bringing the region together, possibly through an interactive website. Following a period of research and development led by Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM), the West Midlands Faiths Forum was launched in June 2003. This is an independent body aiming to provide a 'meeting place' for the voices of the diversity of faith groups that will provide a medium whereby views can be heard and gathered in a structured manner by regional bodies, including the Regional Assembly. The West Midlands Faiths Forum (WMFF) received its original funding through the Regional Strategic Engagement Fund, resourced by Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and the West Midlands Regional Assembly. Since then other funding has been received from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and grants from other sources.

The main aim of the West Midlands Faiths Forum is to have a developmental and collaborative role concerning faith issues in respect of the West Midlands Regional Assembly and other statutory organisations and agencies, especially those concerned with social cohesion, inclusiveness and regeneration. The stated objectives are:

- To promote the recognition that spiritual values are indispensable to the maintenance of an inclusive and cohesive society.
- To gather the views of faith communities concerning the policies necessary to generate this.
- To offer views on the impact of public policies, practices and opinions on these communities.
- To monitor, evaluate and review action by AWM and the Regional Assembly and relevant agencies from a faith perspective.
- To help build the capacity of faith communities to engage with policy-makers and service providers.
- To help address issues of religious discrimination.
- To be a resource and contact for interfaith co-operation.

⁸ Believing in the Region: a baseline study of faith bodies across the West Midlands (2006)

The West Midlands Faiths Forum has an Executive Committee reflecting the region's diversity and a series of policy groups. The accountable body to the West Midlands Faiths Forum has been provided by The Birmingham Foundation since December 2004 and the secretariat function by the Coventry Diocese since the start of 2006.

In addition, the Upper Springs network has been set up to try to network Christians in particular. This is the result of a partnership to bring together a number of strategic partners and key Christian resource organisations to serve communities in the West Midlands. It is the "coming together" of a range of delivery organisations which are experienced in direct delivery of social action and engagement and resource organisations who provide a range of support services and resources to support and develop the direct delivery. The key to Upper Springs is the practical nature of the support, help and advice on offer. It provides opportunities for listening to the stories and experiences of the delivery organisations and to hear what has (and has not) worked. This could be by e-mail, letter, telephone or a personal visit to one of the projects listed on the site.

At the same time, there is considerable diversity around the region and it is difficult to sustain a region wide perspective. In terms of representation it is difficult, as the chair of the faiths forum is also the faiths representative on the regional assembly, and yet feels unable to sustain a deeply engaged representation of the full range of faiths.

There are, nevertheless, various places in which faith communities are engaged strategically in the region, though this tends to be rather unco-ordinated. For example, faiths have been vocal in challenging the logic of establishing a super casino at the NEC, and Birmingham council has asked the Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group (which is multi faith) to get involved in emergency planning. In addition, the Government Office employs two workers to engage with the thirty-eight faith link officers around the region (one per council in the region). In response the regional Faiths Forum is developing a council of sub-regional faiths forums. Each sub-regional forum is represented on the regional forum.

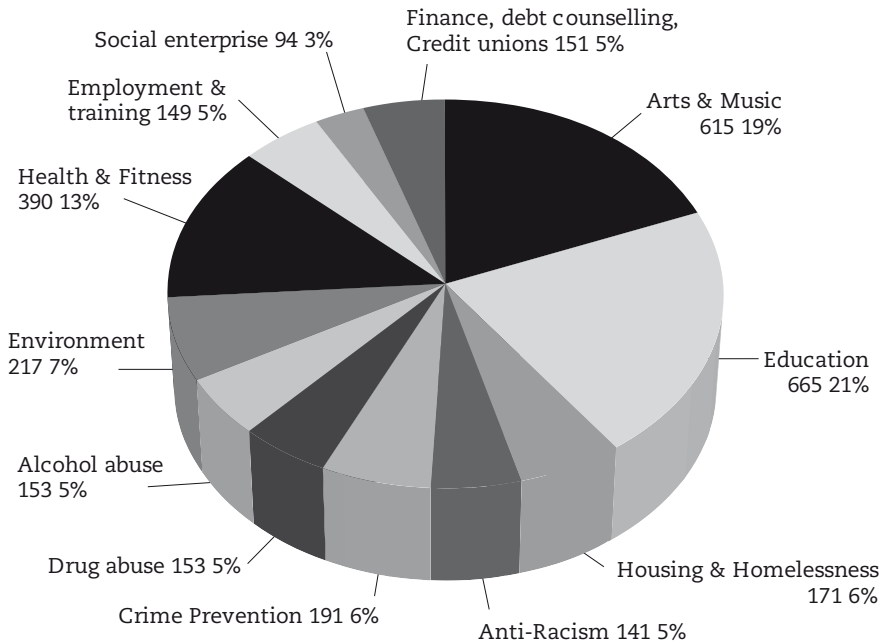
Aspirations for the future of faith based community development in the region include:

- Development of resources for sharing good practice
- Development of much more multi faith work, getting people to relate to each other across faiths
- Provision of affordable training

These activities would have the effect of adding to the 'project' focus a more strategic type of engagement.

In the **North West**, the two largest categories of faith based community activity are 'education' projects and 'arts and music' projects. This indicates more of an emphasis on community education and arts (as opposed to community action, community development and community organising on Popple's typology of community activity⁹).

Categories of Faith Based Projects, North West



Alongside the evidence of surveys of faith projects, our interviews also indicate that there are no formal bodies for faith based community development in the region, though there have been efforts to think through the contribution of faiths in the region. The key report is 'Faith in England's North West'¹⁰, an attempt to audit and reflect upon activity.

There is also interest from regional governance structures and a well established 'Inter-church Merseyside Strategic Partnership' which brings churches together to think about strategic engagement. But the Regional Development Agency (RDA) wanted multi faith representation. A Catholic Monsignor took a lead on this by starting a Regional Faiths Forum with 24 members. This involved some challenges, for example the Baha'i and Buddhists only have one place each and the Zoroastrians have none.

⁹ Popple K (4th ed) (2000) *Analysing Community Work: its theory and practice* Berkshire, Open University Press

¹⁰ Faith in England's Northwest: the contribution made by faith communities to civil society in the region (November 2003) Northwest Forum of Faiths with the NW Regional Development Agency

Three of the counties in the region have Councils of Faith (Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester) and there are representatives from all five counties on the regional forum.

The focus of the various faith groups and sub-regional levels is highly differentiated and it is sometimes difficult to develop a shared or even consensual perspective on the priorities and issues the forum wishes to focus on.

In addition, representatives are sometimes relatively disconnected from the communities they represent and this sometimes inhibits their contribution. It can mean that there is no guarantee that any real constituency of people of faith has a voice in strategic contexts.

In other examples, there are competing organisations, none of which have established particular credibility as representative of their faith traditions. For example, Liverpool Community Spirit emerged as the *de facto* council of faiths but operates separately from the 'recognised' Council of Faiths which has been established in response to the strategic opportunities now available to faith groups. There has been limited work done to engage the organisations with each other.

There is also a relatively large number of faith networks at neighbourhood level, especially in Liverpool where every borough contains a Neighbourhood Renewal area and therefore a Community Empowerment Fund (to which faith communities have responded well).

There is also some suspicion of tokenism and it has sometimes felt, to those engaged, that their presence is not always taken seriously by all the partners.

There is ambition for developing the Faiths Forum using community development approaches which would value better the 'bottom up' approach and work to ensure closer representativeness and connection with the grass roots in the direction of community empowerment.

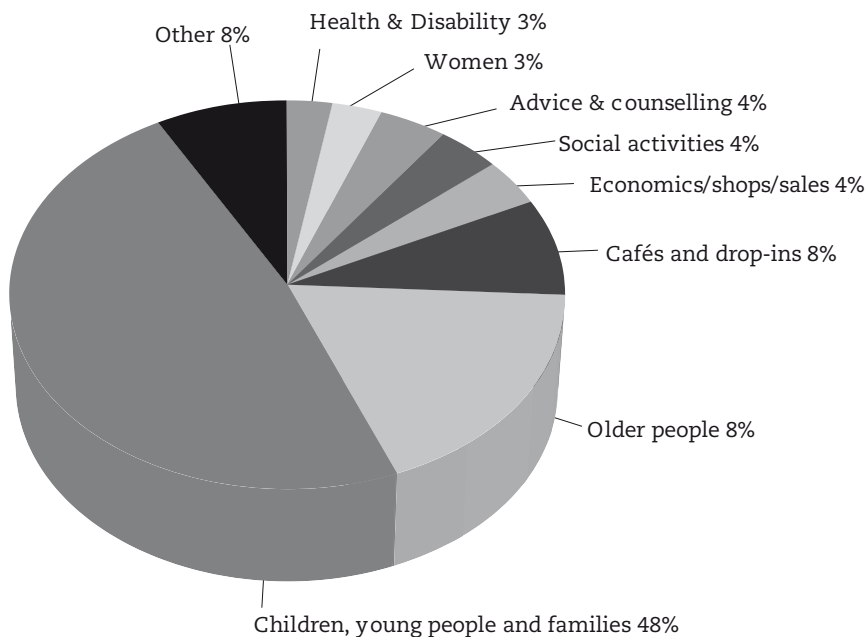
In **Yorkshire and the Humber** we return to a very strong focus on projects to work with children, young people and families¹¹, as in London and the West Midlands.

Our interviews indicated in addition that, overall, lots of people are doing community development but they often don't call it that or think of it in that way. In general there are two main kinds of activity:

- Neighbourhood level work
- Strategic activity, eg faith forums, involvement in LSPs, emergency planning etc

¹¹ Angels and Advocates CRC, Yorkshire and the Humber (2005)

Categories of Faith Based Projects, Yorkshire and the Humber



The region has the Churches' Regional Commission (CRC), which was set up in response to the establishment of the regional development agency. The original intention was to develop a Christian multi denominational body but in practice the Anglicans emerged as its major actors. The commission takes a strategic overview as well as supporting the needs of faith communities in the region responsively with practical inputs.

The region contains a number of cities which tend to be a focus of faith based activity because they have higher levels of disadvantage. A lot of this work is, therefore, project based. But there are also some major cohesion issues in the region, (eg Bradford), and faith communities are very active in this area of interest too.

Just as practical activity varies significantly around the region, so strategic organisation varies too. For example, the faith based umbrella in Hull, SEARCH¹² is integrated into the local voluntary and community sector (VCS) structures in terms of engagement, but this is not necessarily replicated around the region.

¹² search@care4free.net

Indeed, the areas of the region differ widely. In contrast to the overall city focus, North Yorkshire is predominantly rural. There is much less support there for faith communities. Elsewhere the Churches Regional Commission is working with sub-regional partners (eg Churches Together in Grimsby) to do community development work via project support, funding support and advice etc.

Although there is this city focus, CRC does have a project working with the Farm Crisis Network and the Rural Churches Support Network to support farmers in need; however, this is a relatively limited part of the commission's work and is pastoral rather than strategic.

In particular, North Yorkshire has limited activity and support but, it is interesting to note, there is more of a tradition of community arts based development in this part of the region, for example festivals and arts programmes.

The region suffers overall from the high risk of isolation because of the geographical size and spread of population, which is highly dispersed. The area also has large concentrations of new immigrants who represent 7% of the populations of some towns, at least in large part as a result of government dispersal policies in recent years. This has introduced new challenges.

In terms of organisation of faith groups, faith forums in the sub regions tend to fall into two categories: 'strategic' and 'friendly'. All were originally set up as multi faith endeavours but in practice all have been led by Anglicans and Catholics. This has tended to be, in part, because only they have been in a position to provide funding support, resources and time.

There is also a distinction between faith forums which meet out of interest and those which have a representative function.

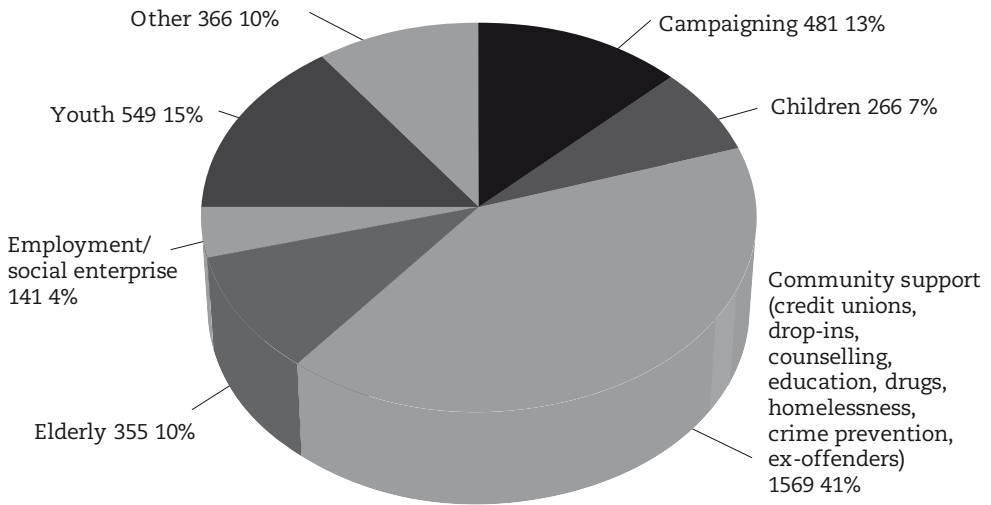
So the region has a great deal of activity. One effect of this is that sometimes regional bodies talk to one sub regional partner and then act as though they have captured the 'faith view' for the whole sub region or region. This fails to grapple with the realities of this very complex and diverse region.

At the same time, the region has a city focus but there is some rural faith based work taking place too. This tends to take a more community arts and education focus. The key axes therefore are between:

- City and rural
- Friendship and community action
- Strategic and project – focused

In the **North East** there appears to be a very strong preponderance of ‘community support’ projects¹³.

Categories of Faith Based Projects, Yorkshire and the Humber



Part of this appearance is a result of the way in which the regional mapping, on which this chart is based, chose to categorise the work of faith communities. ‘Community support’ is a very general category and includes a fairly wide range of activities within it, as demonstrated in the lengthy list of examples given alongside. Nevertheless, this is indicative of the ‘project’ type focus which is present in the other regions. At the same time, it is interesting that this region chooses to identify ‘campaigning’ as a separate category and this represents a substantial part of the work of faiths in the region.

This is one of the least diverse regions (though there is diversity). Our interviews indicate that there is no regional faiths forum but there are eleven inter faith or multi faith bodies across the region. Some are self-conscious about the distinction, though not all. (For discussion of the distinction between multi faith and inter faith see the Inter Faith Network of the UK website at www.interfaithnetwork.org).

Issues of faith representation have been very carefully addressed in Middlesbrough in particular, where there is intense deprivation and the area is considered disadvantaged in the language of policies for neighbourhood renewal. Elsewhere this has not been addressed so consciously, though there is good involvement in all of the areas.

¹³ Faith in the North East

The impetus for the development of Councils of Faith has been the emerging agenda for new structures of governance. This has been consolidated by a concern to promote community cohesion. In some cases, particularly in Middlesbrough, the starting point has been local development agencies though elsewhere (notably Newcastle) it has come from faith leaders. In the case of Newcastle this has been supported by the authority's 'Ethnic and Interfaith Adviser'.

Another good example is Sunderland where the Faiths Council chair is also Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and is very involved in the Community Empowerment Network. Here there has been considerable interfaith work already and there are efforts to 'conscientise'¹⁴ this in the faiths forum.

There are two faith representatives on the Regional Assembly (a Christian and a Hindu) though they share the single 'faiths' position on the assembly. There are also three LSPs in the region with faith representation. As contributors to policy making and strategy, faiths are well regarded in the region though there remains some unease, amongst some, about funding faith based work which is not conducted in partnerships with non faith bodies.

Faith based projects see themselves as distinct from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and talk about a greater sense of identity. There are hopes of building a network of faith based projects, in part to think about why this should be.

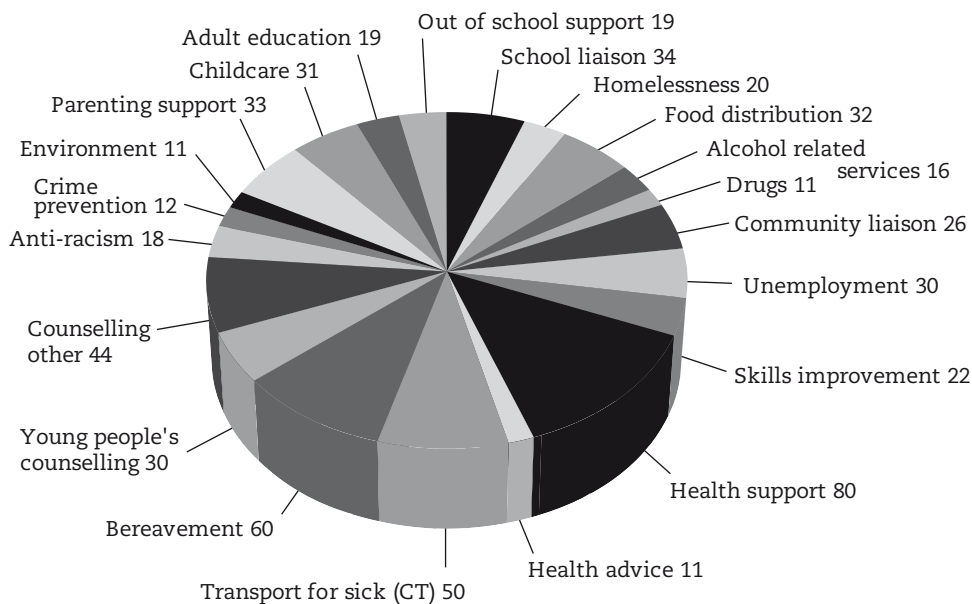
There are some outstanding bodies in the region, too. For example, Catalyst (formerly Churches Acting Together), the Key Project and the Open Gate project – a post-release support project for women offenders – are indicative of significant energy amongst faith communities in the region. The region also came up with a strategic plan to fund community development workers in areas of greatest deprivation. The aim is to 'grow' faith based community development workers within localities who at the same time will have a wider vision than the neighbourhood alone and can tap it into broader opportunities and learning.

In the **East of England** it should be noted that the data is complicated¹⁵. They were gathered as percentages of numbers of projects reporting doing work in a number of pre-set categories. Many respondents indicated positively to more than one category for the same work and this has resulted in a percentage total of many more than 100. This makes a numerical reading of faith based community activity problematic and the figures here should be understood as indicating areas of activity rather than actual activities themselves. This is further complicated by the very narrative form of

¹⁴ Friere P (DATE) Pedagogy of the Oppressed ETC

¹⁵ Faith in the East of England EEFC and Cambridge University (2005)

Categories of Faith Based Projects, East of England



discussion of the data in the main report which does not fully or directly reflect the categories offered in the data collection method.

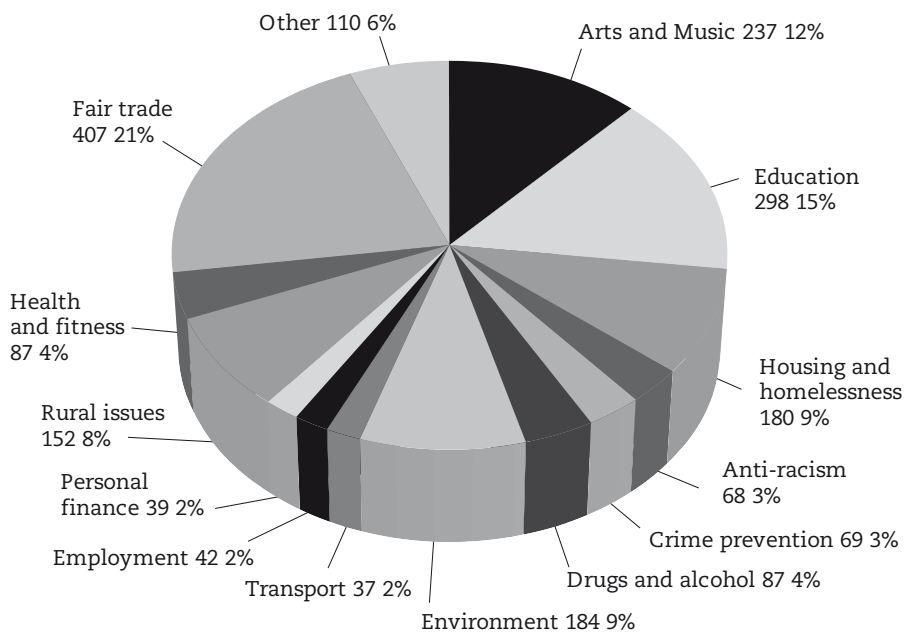
Nevertheless, that discussion, coupled with the data here, appears to indicate a strong presence of project level work in the area of health support. There is also a significant amount of child and young people focused project work.

We also know from indicative interviews that there is a very well developed strategic dimension in the region. This is underpinned by the emergence of the East of England Faiths Council which is a representative body with a presence on the regional assembly. It has a membership of about 120 faith groups and meets regularly to address issues of policy and practice affecting faith communities across the region. Membership is lively and attendance is strong.

The Faiths Council also works with Anglia Ruskin University, which is based in the region, to operate FaithNetEast, an information and learning 'hub' which acts as a community development and practice 'arm'. This body provides a newsletter, e-bulletin, training and information events (usually in the form of day long workshops and conferences) and a community development worker who works with projects in the region to develop their capacity and skills. The overall aim is to support putting into practice strategic needs and directions. FaithNetEast also operates a 2500 strong database of faith based organisations and actors in the region as a tool for networking and sharing. This is publicly available on a website (www.faithneteast.org.uk).

In the **South West**, there is a strong focus on education, housing and homelessness and environmental work, all at the project level¹⁶. The strong presence of ‘fairtrade’ as a category of activity reflects a general awareness amongst faith projects of ‘fairtrade’ policies in purchasing goods and this is not necessarily an area of work as such.

Categories of Faith Based Projects, South West



Here, too, there is a well developed faiths base. This has emerged largely out of the energies of individuals and the impetus given by the introduction of a regional assembly which faiths felt they wanted to engage with.

There is an employed South West Churches Regional Advisor who has been in post since 2000. This post was set up by an ecumenical meeting of twenty six church leaders of all the mainstream Christian denominations including bishops from six Church of England dioceses. The group felt that there should be joint engagement with the regional agenda that was emerging.

The Church of England had asked for a seat on the new assembly and were encouraged by it to seek a more multifaith approach. The South West Council of Faiths was set up as a result. This is not a funded body and this has meant that there has always been pressure on anyone trying to work within it. The work of the Council has been limited therefore.

¹⁶ Faith in Action in the South West

In 2003, the churches, having the capacity to do so, set up a Churches Regional Forum in order to engage more robustly than the Council of Faiths had been able. Since much of the Christian membership of the Council of Faiths overlaps with the new Churches' Forum, this further militated against the strong engagement of the multifaith body.

Another turning point in the life of the Council of Faiths has been the coming together of FaithNetSouthWest. This is a very different kind of body which is not representative but rather acts as an agency to support the region's faith communities in social and community activity, including engagement with the public sector. The Director of this body is also the Churches Regional Advisor and is the faiths representative on the assembly, representing the South West Churches' Regional Forum and the South West Council of Faiths. In these two capacities she is able to promote a more multifaith perspective, though it is felt that this should be further developed. There is currently lobbying for a second faiths seat on the assembly and it is felt that the potential capacity is there for this to be effective.

In early 2007 FaithNetSouthWest is running an event to hear what faith communities themselves would like to see happen in the region. This is an attempt to challenge the perceived instrumentalism of governance structures towards faith communities and meet them at their own starting points. It is an attempt to engage with the regional strategy freshly and meaningfully.

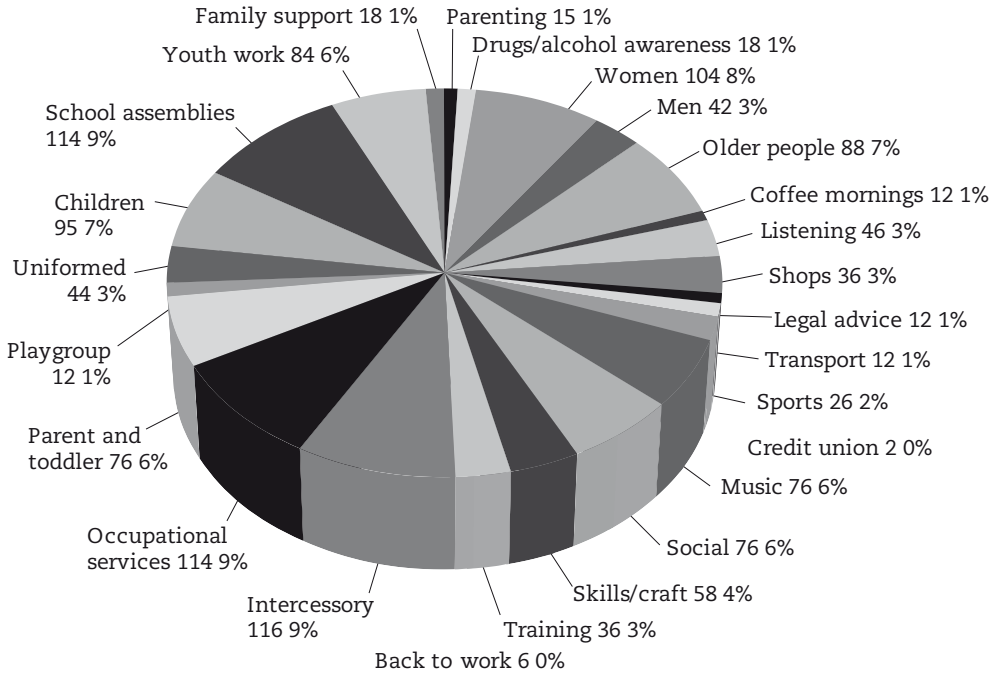
Faiths are generally well regarded in the regional assembly, not least because of the recent setting up and activities of FaithNetSouthWest. Faiths are seen as active and proactive. The Communities Directorate of the Government Office is positive towards faiths too. Engagement with the Regional Development Agency has been more problematic and needs some further work. Recent discussions have shown that the RDA is starting to become interested in what faiths can contribute, in particular through FaithNetSouthWest.

There is awareness amongst faith communities in the region of what they bring that is distinctive: that they are present and committed; that they have a strong sense of identity and purpose; that they are committed to reconciliation; that they regularly review and think about their values. This adds up to a fresh perspective on bigger issues and can constructively challenge the policy consensus. This is consolidated by the fact that faith communities can often rise above terms of office and short term contracts.

At the same time as fostering a strategic focus, FaithNetSouthWest is also careful to respect power and autonomy of faith structures for social action at the neighbourhood level and sees itself as a facilitator of the local as and where it is sought out and welcomed.

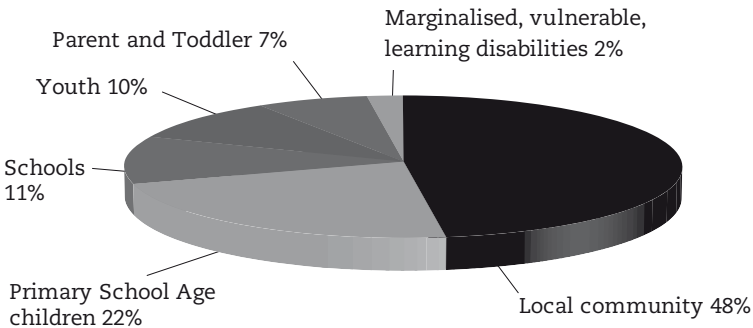
In the **East Midlands** there are two sources which are useful, though none is region wide. The first¹⁷ identifies activities as represented in the chart below (derived from the original data):

Categories of Faith Based Projects, East Midlands



This contrasts with an account of activities in Leicester¹⁸ where the categories are hugely more limited and tell us very little about what faiths are active in specifically.

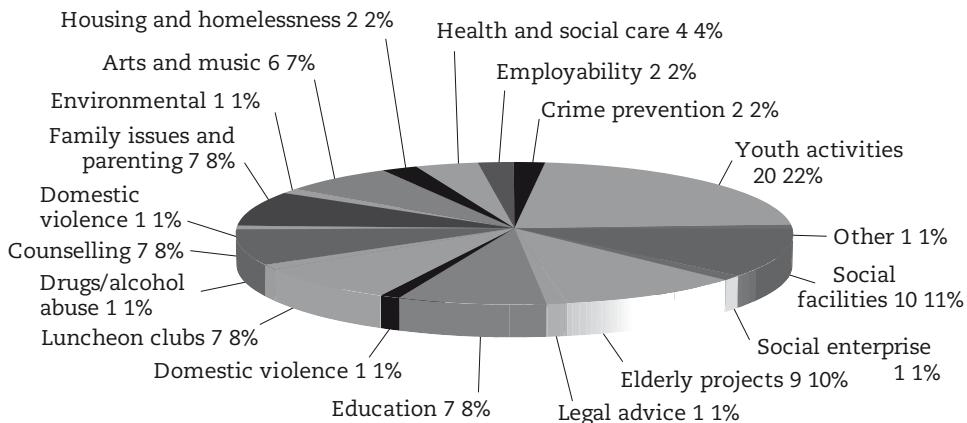
Categories of Faith Based Projects, East Midlands (Leicester)



¹⁷ Faiths in Derbyshire

This sub-regional source¹⁸ also shows that youth activities, education and work with the elderly are predominant activities, again at project level.

Categories of Faith Based Projects, East Midlands (other)



Our interviews also indicate that the Multi Faith Centre at Derby University is a focus of activity in the region. It acts as a conduit for the local, regional and national (and is starting to develop a European dimension too). Until now there has been a big effort focused on the building and that has started to broaden out now to wider activities. The Centre works to facilitate and represent the work of faith communities, for example with a presence on the police advisory board.

The Derby Forum of Faiths is also represented on the Derby City Partnership and on the 'Cultural City' board for Derby.

The Multi Faith Centre is a very visible presence for faiths and has been approached often to act as representative in a variety of strategic contexts.

There is an Arts and Culture Faith Forum in the East Midlands Churches Forum. This is a regional forum aiming to bring together people involved in arts and culture. In this sense arts are a focus for working together.

The East Midlands Faiths Forum has a representative on the East Midlands Regional Assembly. Nevertheless the Forum is young and still rather fragile. There is a development task. This is in part because of the speed with which it was called to respond to the regional assembly with a representative presence. The East Midlands Churches Forum (which is Christian and ecumenical) produced a Christian representative. The Leicester Interfaith Council worked to produce an 'other faiths' representative. The process for this was that the interfaith forum in Leicester invited two members from each of the local interfaith groups in the region to a meeting where the representative

¹⁸ Embracing the Present, Planning the Future

was nominated. However the process was unfunded and there were difficulties in ensuring breadth of presence. This reflects the reality that much of what happens in terms of the strategic engagement of faiths in the region is done without funding and support and depends on the good will of certain individuals in their spare time.

At the same time there is genuine interest and commitment in faith communities at the strategic level in particular parts of the region. The city of Derby is a case in point, where there is a distinct faiths strand within the 'culture' domain of the City Partnership for strategic development. Leicester, Derby and Nottingham have also been particularly engaged at regional level.

But, the seven interfaith groups across the region (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Mansfield, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Loughborough) share very little dialogue, The regional faiths forum does not meet regularly but not all sub regional bodies have become members. A recent regional forum meeting agreed to pursue a stronger relationship with the government office. Currently there are no mechanisms for communication up and down the strategic 'ladders'.

So, overall there is a lot of faith based activity in the East Midlands, but no single focus regionally, despite the existence of the regional faiths forum.

A Note on Sharing a Language of Thinking and Analysis

A key message from all of these data, and particularly from the example of the East Midlands, is that data is gathered and presented in highly differentiated ways from place to place. This, of course, distorts comparison, though by acknowledging the differences we have tried to engage in useful discussion which works around them in this report and we are not, in any case, attempting a comparative study.

More importantly, we feel that this raises a crucial point about the ability of faiths nationally to identify, demonstrate, discuss and develop their contribution to community activities in a coherent and widely communicable way. Because the categories and words used to grapple with this differ so much from place to place, it is unlikely that we will mean the same things from one conversation to another.

Yet, in a context where so many non-faith actors want increasingly to work with faiths, and where people in one tradition want to work with people in another, it is important that language is used which can cross the divides and is understood and shared as widely as possible.

For this reason we suggest that some of the categories and definitions identified in this review (listed in figure 1, above) could come to form the basis of a new typology of faith based community activity, to be developed in dialogue within, between and beyond faith communities as widely as possible. This typology could be used in future work to develop shared understandings of the role and contribution of faiths in communities from one place to another and across and beyond traditions. We hope that such a dialogue will arise as a result of this report and will actively seek to promote it.

What Do Faiths Need to Flourish?

A strong starting point for thinking about what faiths need to flourish is what they have identified themselves. Our review identifies 56 recommendations across 24 regional reports and publications. These are as follows:

Recommendations from existing reports

NORTH WEST

- Capacity building is needed within faith communities so they can access partnership initiatives and funding more effectively
- Potential partners need to be more aware of what faith communities have to offer
- It is important that faith networks are inclusive of and accountable to all faiths
[source: Faith in England's North West: the contribution made by faith communities in civil society in the region (November 2003)]
- Identify further areas of research which would provide a deeper level of knowledge about the contribution of the faith communities 'sector'
[source: Faith in England's North West: economic impact assessment (February 2005)]
- Secular partners and faith communities need to increase their awareness of spiritual and religious capital and discuss and 'surface' concepts further
- Research should be commissioned to make a UK comparative study of engagements of faith groups in civil society
- Secular partners should devise faiths friendly funding and evaluation criteria
- Faith communities need to develop an inter-faith ethic for working in partnership
[source: Faith in Action: the dynamic connection between spiritual capital and religious capital (William Temple Foundation 2005)]

- Develop information and dissemination mechanisms, for example area wide newsletters and directories, conference and training events
- Integration of faith as an aspect of equality in equal opportunities training
- Area wide faith based infrastructural partnerships to be developed
- Training for employees in working with faith groups
- Development of IT systems to support better outreach, networking and dissemination

[source: Anglican Diocese of Liverpool]

LONDON

- Better co-ordination between faiths and governance structures and more informed partnership working
- Better connections between representatives and the represented – more contact?
- Identification of officers in non-faith based organisations for liaising with faiths
- Develop a regional forum of faiths to provide expertise, a voice and an information and dialogue role

[source: various, see bibliography]

SOUTH WEST

- Better information about the size, distribution and contribution of faith communities in areas
- Courageous engagement by faith communities themselves – taking risks
[source: Daily Service: how faith communities contribute to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration in the South West of England (September 2004)]
- Developing faith buildings as community resources
- Demonstrate to public bodies the importance of faith buildings to local communities
- Funders should be more flexible in their approach to faith groups
[source: Faith in Action in the South West (June 2006)]
- Demonstrate that faiths currently contribute more than they receive from government

[source: A Vibrant Church: a report of the Church of England in rural Gloucestershire (February 2003)]

YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER

- Networks and information sharing are key
- Faith groups need to ‘audit’ their models and understandings to ensure that their community activities are as accessible as possible to the wider community
[source: Count Us In (2000)]
- Faith groups need help with maintaining their buildings for community use in recognition of their value
- Involvement in strategic partnerships and networks is essential and non-faith partners should encourage this
[source: Angels and Advocates: church social action in Yorkshire and the Humber (November 2002), CRC]
- Public bodies should develop strategies for faith inclusion
- Best practice in faith engagement should be identified and disseminated
- Contact lists/directories of faith communities should be developed and maintained
- Faiths and their partners should develop a strategy for religious literacy
[source: Religious Literacy: a practical guide to the region’s faith communities, CRC]

EAST MIDLANDS

- Demonstrate the contribution of faith groups and ensure that policy makers notice them and include them
- Encourage highly visible faith based cultural events
[source: Faithful to Culture: exploring the link between culture and faith across the East Midlands (June 2004)]
- Funders and partners need to be more open and proactive in their engagement with faith groups
[source: Embracing the Present, Planning the Future: social action by faith communities in Leicester (July 2004)]
- Develop faith friendly accountability structures
- Promote the understanding of faiths amongst potential partners
- Develop an agenda for continuing research
[source: Faith in Derbyshire: working towards a better Derbyshire (May 2006)]

WEST MIDLANDS

- Developing the proactive strategic dimensions of faith group engagements
[source: A Regional Faiths Forum? (2002)]
- Capacity building for faith groups as well as for their non-faith potential partners
- Promote inclusive engagement of all faiths in a faiths forum
- Faith communities to work effectively with the media to promote their contribution and challenge stereotypes
[source: Believing in the West Midlands: report of the first conference of the West Midlands Faiths Forum (2005)]
- Address community cohesion and extremism and build cohesion through faith
[source: Cohesion Through Faith: good practice and positive action in the West Midlands]

EAST OF ENGLAND

- Faith groups should develop skills in communicating what they do in order to win increased public support (and funding)
- Potential partners and funders need to develop awareness of the specialised knowledge held by faith groups
[source: Faith in Action: a report on faith communities and social capital in the East of England (May 2003)]
- Address tensions arising out of differing values bases and priorities of faith and non-faith partners
- Manage and disseminate information on funding sources and training opportunities etc
[source: Faith in the East of England: a research study on the vital role played by faith communities in the social, economic and spiritual life of the region (July 2005)]
- Government to recognise the significant educational and community use to which faith buildings are put and to grasp the huge financial burden 'heritage' can place on faiths
[source: Church Buildings: a source of delight and a cause of anxiety (November 2003)]

SOUTH EAST

- Need for infrastructural organisations that can network and inform faith groups
- Need for mechanisms for faith and non-faith partners to learn how to work with each other
[source: Beyond Belief? (March 2004)]
- Need to grow capacity at an appropriate speed, possibly through 'incubator' bodies which are already well established
[source: A Strategic Business Plan for the South East England Faith Forum (2005)]
- Government and voluntary sector to respect the equality and diversity of service providers as well as users
[source: Being Here: how the church is engaging with the communities of Brighton and Hove (April 2004)]

NORTH EAST

- The fabric of some faith buildings needs attention
- There should be strategies for regional community development and for the funding of regeneration activities
- Improved communication between faith communities and others
[source: Coalfields Regeneration in North East England (January 2002)]
- Need to build capacity within faith communities
- More understanding is needed amongst non-faith based partners
[source: Faith in the North East: social action by faith communities in the region (September 2004)]

Bringing the Recommendations Together

We have applied a process of theme identification to these recommendations and identified 14 over-arching themes into which these fall, as follows:

- 1] Appropriate capacity building is needed which is responsive and sensitive to existing circumstances
- 2] Partners need more awareness of the role of faiths and better 'religious literacy'. This could be supported by the appointment of 'faiths officers' in partnership organisations
- 3] Faith networks and services need to be inclusive of other faiths and non-faith partners

- 4] An ongoing agenda for research and strategic direction should be identified
- 5] Faiths should demonstrate their contribution clearly
- 6] Partners should devise 'faiths friendly' funding and evaluation criteria and opportunities for strategic engagement
- 7] Faiths need to devise clear ways of working with each other
- 8] Networks should be established for strategic engagement and dissemination
- 9] Faith groups should develop IT systems to support their networking and dissemination functions
- 10] Strategies for better co-ordination between faiths and governance structures should be devised.
- 11] There needs to be better connection between 'representatives' and 'the represented'
- 12] There needs to be support for developing and maintaining faith buildings as community resources, especially where they are designated 'heritage' buildings
- 13] Best practice in faith communities should be identified and disseminated
- 14] Faiths should be encouraged to hold highly visible faith based cultural events and to develop their cultural presence through clear media strategies

Conclusions

This report identifies what faiths say they are doing in communities and what they feel they need to do it better. Within this, we have considered what it is that faiths add.

Our review of sources and literature, together with iterative interviews across the regions, indicates that:

- Many faith communities are doing community development but without necessarily calling it that
- Language and definitions are highly differentiated and this inhibits comparability and communication of the contribution and needs of faiths in community development

- Nevertheless it is clear that faiths are enormously active in communities and are responsible for community development work worth many millions to the economy and which is priceless in human terms
- The majority of this activity takes place in community or neighbourhood projects
- Often this takes place in the most marginalised places where other agencies have withdrawn
- Faiths are frequently present and active for the long term, working with greatest and most challenging need, stretching scarce resources and seeing people and problems in the round and with a committed, fresh and loving eye – ‘unmeasureable’ value from one perspective, but ‘priceless’ from another
- Much of it emerges out of worshipping communities but extends far beyond into the wider community
- A majority of the work in many places focuses on children and young people, and on older people
- That said, there is a range of up to 48 activities altogether identified across the regions
- This includes an increasingly strong strategic engagement where faiths are involved as representatives in governance structures (for example Local Strategic Partnerships and Regional Assemblies), or as influencers in strategic and policy partnerships (for example, neighbourhood renewal organisations)
- It is likely that the 48 categories arising could be themed and rationalised down to about 20 or so and this might inform a simpler, more comparable and communicable tool for understanding the activities of faiths in communities
- This could help faiths to tell their stories and demonstrate their value to a sometimes sceptical non-faith audience, for example in policy making and with funders
- But such a tool should be developed in dialogue as widely as possible, involving faiths, their partners and people in communities
- It could be accompanied by more visible media and cultural communications, such as community festivals, events and other means of outreach which demonstrate the presence and value of faiths in communities in such a way as to help ‘demystify’ their role

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List of people interviewed

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