northumbria
UNIVERSITY

Audit of Faith Group Activities and Community Projects in the London Borough of Sutton

FINAL REPORT
January 2014

Contents

About the authors

Dr Rachael Chapman is a Principal Lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences and Languages. She has a particular interest and expertise on faith and third sector engagement in governance, together with issues of power, representation and democratic legitimacy.

Paul Biddle is a Research Fellow in the Department of Social Sciences and Languages. In 2011-12, Paul was part of a multi-institutional team that delivered the Ministry of Justice funded project 'Race, Crime and Justice' and has also undertaken research into the housing needs and aspirations of BME communities.

Oliver Moss is a Senior Research Fellow/Research Development Manager in the Department of Social Sciences and Languages. A cultural geographer, Oliver's research interests are in landscape, place and nature; landscape, place and memory; and community resilience.

Adele Irving is a Research Fellow in the Department of Social Sciences and Languages. Her research interests include the social impacts of the arts, multiple social exclusion/homelessness, welfare reform and youth offending.

Dr Bankole Cole is a Reader in Criminology in the Department of Social Sciences and Languages. Bankole has conducted research for police forces, local criminal justice boards, youth offending teams, probation and the Crown Prosecution Service. He has recently completed a project exploring the impact of recent migration in north-east England.

Acknowledgements

1.   Executive Summary

Introduction and aims of the audit

➢ The 'Audit of Faith Group Activities and Community Projects in the London Borough of Sutton' project was commissioned in April 2013 by the Safer Sutton Partnership Service. It was delivered by Northumbria University. The audit was designed to enable the Safer Sutton Partnership, the London Borough of Sutton, faith based organisations and other stakeholders to better understand the nature and contribution of faith based social action and community activities – and the extent and ways in which these dovetail with the responsibilities and priorities of public agencies, including the London Borough of Sutton's Corporate Plan objectives of a safer, fairer, greener and smarter Borough.

Research and policy context

➢ From the 1990s onwards, new opportunities have emerged for faith and, to a lesser extent, humanist engagement in policy development and service delivery. These include greater representation on partnership bodies, expanded consultative roles and the provision by faith-based organisations of state funded welfare services and initiatives. Such opportunities emerged in the context of previous UK Government agendas on partnership, democratic renewal, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism, together with the inclusion of 'religion and belief' in the Equality Act. The coalition Government's policies on localism, the Big Society, integration and deficit-reduction suggest a continued, if not increased, agenda for statutory partners to work in dialogue and partnership with the voluntary and community sectors.

➢ The contributions faith and wider voluntary and community sector groups make range from social action and nurturing intra- and inter-faith cohesion and tolerance, to more externally focused efforts in regard to citizenship, participation and partnership. Previous research has identified BME and faith organisations as having a particularly crucial role in giving a voice to (and advocating for) marginalised groups, such as asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants. Their contribution is often motivated from their spiritual capital i.e. theology, worshiping traditions, value systems or moral visions.

➢ From a local authority perspective, engaging with faith groups can help councils achieve their policy and/or broader societal goals, such as those linked to integration, community safety, the environment, active citizenship, effective and responsive service provision, and poverty reduction. It can also help councils to improve their understanding and accommodation of diverse needs and interests, meet equality and diversity requirements, and enhance their reputation and community relations. Effective faith engagement and partnership, however, can be challenging and time consuming. Anxieties may emerge over proselytisation, equalities issues, the perceived privileging of faith groups regarding policy influence and funding, and the extent to which diversity of faith and no faith can be represented.

Audit methodology

The audit comprised two elements:

➢ Survey: In September 2013 a pre-piloted audit survey was sent either electronically or by post to 144 individuals from faith groups. A total of 65 fully or partially completed surveys were returned from the 144 faith groups contacted (response rate: 45%).

➢ Interviews: During October and November 2013 semi-structured telephone interviews were undertaken with representatives of 12 faith groups. Efforts were made to ensure that interviewees reflected the range of faiths that responded to the survey.

Key Findings

The nature, extent and contribution of faith group activities

➢ Among the respondents, activities and projects are most commonly provided for children, the elderly (those aged 60+), and young people (those aged under 25).

➢ Direct provision of faith groups participating in the survey most commonly takes the form of 'religious or cultural activities', 'clubs, drop in's or groups for different people' and 'crèche/play groups'. Referral/signposting most commonly takes place in relation to financial advice, counselling, food-banks and advocacy.

➢ Faith groups are involved in one-to-one activities to support individuals with a wide range of issues including bereavement, terminal illness, isolation, debt and relationship difficulties. They can take a holistic approach to support with a view to helping individuals and families with complex and multiple health, emotional care, economic and support needs.

➢ Links between faith group provision and local authority initiatives are more common in relation to initiatives on 'Working with Young People' (70% of respondents) and 'Aging Well' (61% of respondents), although between 38% and 48% of respondents also identified a link with 'Safe Communities' and 'Living Well' initiatives.

➢ Many faith group activities are offered to those of no religion or to various religions (78% or more of respondents indicated this). 26% stated that they delivered activities and projects only to those of a specific faith.

➢ Collaborative work with other faith groups is more frequent among survey participants in relation to food banks, street pastors and religious and/or other cultural activities. There appears to be relatively little current direct partnership working with public sector organisations and private businesses.

➢ Interviewees were clear that their faith group often lacked the expertise, volunteers, staff and time to respond to all the needs of those seeking their help.

The characteristics of faith based project and service users
- ➢ Faith group provision can have a significant reach, with 72% of respondents indicating that 50 or more people use or participate in their faith group activities or community projects each week, compared with 28% providing for 49 or fewer weekly participants/users.

- ➢ 50% or more respondents reported that some or all of their faith group's activities/community projects were provided to: 'white-British' participants', 'white-other', 'mixed-white and black Caribbean', 'mixed-white and black African', 'black or black British-Caribbean' and 'black or black British-African' participants. Over 50% of respondents stated that those using their faith group's activities included those of Indian nationality, Polish nationality (42%), and Tamil heritage (36%).

The geographical location of provision
- ➢ Faith group activity is provided across several wards, the most common being SM1 1, SM1 2, SM1 3 and SM2 5, SM2 6, SM2 7 where ten or more faith groups indicated provision of their activity.

Project and community activity staff and volunteers
- ➢ The findings indicate that faith groups participating in the audit tend to rely heavily on volunteers, although some have between one and four full- or part-time staff.

- ➢ The majority of faith groups participating in the audit operate with between 1-4 full-time staff (49%/15), or no full-time staff (45%/14). Many faith groups did not have part time staff i.e. 42% (14) of respondents, although 52% (17) had 1-4 part-time staff, and 6% (2) had 5-10 part-time staff.

- ➢ A total of 7% (3) of respondents stated that their faith group had no volunteers, 67% (31) stated between 1 and 49 volunteers and 26% (12) stated 50 volunteers or more.

- ➢ A key challenge facing faith groups is securing sufficient volunteers to enable them to maintain existing and develop future provision.

Perceived contribution and outcomes
- ➢ Interviewees reported a range of project outcomes focused around maintaining and improving individual, family and community well-being and cohesion e.g. through reducing isolation, assisting child-development, supporting potentially alienated adolescents, relieving the impacts of poverty, and the provision of a Street Pastor initiative and cross-cultural and multi- faith events.

Faith group development, capacity and support needs
- ➢ The survey included questions that explored the development of, and changes experienced by, faith groups in the previous two years. The most commonly reported *increases* relate to the range and volume of activities and community projects delivered, membership bases and the number of people engaging with activities/community projects.

➢ For the majority of respondents, local authority contract and commissioning funding was not seen to be relevant. Indeed, some interviewees suggested that they were too small to bid (as a primary provider) for commissioned activities. Consequently, the shift in funding from grants to contract and commissioning is felt to be compromising the long-term viability of some faith group activities in the Borough that were more dependent on grant funding.

➢ Faith groups experience a range of capacity constraints. Those most commonly reported among respondents were: too few volunteers (82%), too few members of staff (52%) and lack of time (49%). Around one-third also stated that their faith group experienced difficulties in respect of: identifying and/or securing funding, infrastructure, a lack of information about local council agendas, policies or strategies, and difficulties arising from a lack of appropriately-skilled staff and/or volunteers. These capacity constraints can act as a barrier to developments in faith-based social action and partnership working with others, including statutory partners.

➢ The most common information and training needs are in relation to developing stronger links with local councillors (57% of respondents), caring for vulnerable adults (48% of respondents) and how to identify and/or apply for funding (48% of respondents). Between 33% and 43% of respondents also stated that their faith group had information or training needs in relation to health and safety and/or information about the Council's role/responsibilities, agendas, policies and strategies and about how to lobby/influence policymakers.

Websites and social media
➢ The majority of respondents (89%) stated that their faith group had its own website. Some groups also use Facebook (46%) and Twitter (32%). Interviews suggest some faith groups acknowledge the potential value of websites and social media for promotion (rather than communication) activities. However, social media was not regarded as an appropriate substitute for face-to-face contact and there were concerns that an over-reliance on social media might exclude those for whom it was unfamiliar.

Faith group premises
➢ The majority of participating faith groups (72%) deliver some or all of their activities and projects from their own premises. Premises often are fully accessible to wheelchair users (71% reported this), although hearing loop availability is less common (around 37% of respondents indicate that all of their premises have this). The availability of parking could be an issue for some faith groups given that 21% of respondents indicate that none of their premises have any.

➢ Faith groups sometimes hire rooms to other groups. Over half of the faith groups participating in the audit indicated that they had rooms available for hire by other community groups or individuals for their activities or meetings (59%) and/or private functions or social events (50%). A minority that did not currently hire out rooms suggested that they would consider it (13%).

Networking, partnership working and collaboration

➢ The majority of respondents (78%) are aware of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum, although only 26% stated that their group engages with it, compared to 74% who stated their faith group does not engage. The importance of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum was acknowledged by interviewees as valuable for facilitating cohesion and understanding of local policy initiatives, but it was felt more resources are needed to develop its role. This suggests a review of the role and resourcing of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum, in relation to supporting local faith based social action, partnership working (with faith, VCS and statutory partners) as well as more general inter-faith dialogue could be beneficial.

➢ Working collaboratively was felt to enable faith groups to articulate, and act on their concerns (e.g. in respect of poverty, social exclusion and wellbeing) with a view to addressing these more effectively than is possible by working in isolation.

➢ However, interviews also revealed concerns related to partnership working and collaboration, including: complications arising from different agendas, cultures and priorities; power imbalances; concerns that faith groups could lose 'their people' to other groups; and lack of capacity and time for partnership working. Concerns were also raised relating to divergent views, histories of conflict and anxieties associated with the potential for secular organisations to feel uncomfortable working with faith groups because of their religious basis, and that engaging with some organisations might result in the politicisation of their faith group.

➢ Interviewees gave examples of successful collaborative working. However, some interviewees felt that previous attempts at collaborative working with statutory organisations had not been a positive experience due to a lack of funding and public sector restructuring. As a result, some interviewees appeared 'lukewarm' about the potential value of their faith group working with statutory agencies in future.

➢ Many faith groups participating in the audit reported links with local faith schools (53% of respondents indicated this), and non-faith schools (69% of respondents indicated this).

➢ Just over half of the respondents stated that their faith group did not engage in policy consultations, networking or lobbying in the local area, with 38% stating that their group did so.

➢ A number of faith groups have links with local councillors (with approximately 49% indicating this). There is, however, significant interest in developing links further, as suggested by the finding that 62% of respondents stated that their group would be interested in working more closely with local councillors. Around 47% stated that their faith group did not currently have links with their local councillor. As already reported, one of the most common information and training needs expressed by respondents relates to developing stronger links with local councillors (57% of respondents).

Future direction and activities

➢ Respondents most commonly expressed a desire to work collaboratively in the future with other local faith and voluntary groups (and to a lesser extent statutory partners) across many of the service/user groups, activities and Council initiatives e.g. 'aging well', 'living well', 'independent living', 'working with young people' and 'safer communities'.

➢ There is interest among some faith groups in working more collaboratively with the Council. Between 9 and 14 respondents reported interest in working in the future with public sector organisations in connection with each of the Council initiatives.

➢ A majority of interviewees felt that their faith group was currently financially secure and would remain so for the foreseeable future. However, the financial position of a minority of organisations was more precarious, with at least one facing possible closure during 2014 unless further funding was obtained.

➢ Interviewees suggested that future activities would be prioritised among those groups for whom they currently delivered activities (e.g. children and young people, parents and older people). Several interviewees indicated an interest in bidding for commissioned services, but were unsure if they were sufficiently experienced and sized to do so. They felt training in grant application and bid writing would be helpful. Plans were also suggested for developing - perhaps collaboratively - a more co-ordinated and structured set of activities focused on meeting the needs of those living in the Borough, and of those in more deprived areas (e.g. St. Helier and Shanklin). This could include activities for elderly people and support for those with mental health issues and substance misuse problems.

➢ Priority areas mentioned for development among the faith groups interviewed include debt advice, the School Pastor' initiative and advertising and promotion of activities.

Conclusions

➢ This audit demonstrates that faith groups in the Borough contribute a variety of community projects and initiatives, as well as more informal ad-hoc support to individuals. In terms of reach, a significant proportion of respondents 72% (28) reported that 50 or more people use or participate in non-worshiping activities or community projects each week, with 28% (11) stating 49 or fewer participants/users.

➢ Among the respondents, activities and community projects are most commonly provided to children, the elderly and young people, and include religious or cultural activities, clubs/drop in's or groups for different people and crèche/play groups. This suggests that there are overlaps in the interests and activities of several faith groups and local authority initiatives and priorities focused particularly on young people and aging well.

➢ In addition to direct provision, many faith groups also undertake referral and signposting activities, most commonly in relation to financial advice, counselling, food banks and advocacy.

➢ Overlaps in the interests and priorities of different organisations offer the potential for mutually beneficial working relationships, collaboration and support to be developed and maintained with a view to addressing common goals. Where collaborative working was already in evidence, this was felt to enable faith groups to articulate, and act on their concerns more effectively than is possible through more isolated working. Among faith groups responding to the survey, interest in future collaboration is more commonly expressed in relation to other local faith and voluntary sector groups than statutory partners and businesses across many activities and service/user groups.

➢ Interest is also evident in respect to working more closely with statutory partners, including local councillors in which 62% (26) of faith group respondents indicated an interest in stronger relationships between them in the future. Some interviewees also expressed a wish to work with statutory agencies to help identify potential venues for delivering activities and community projects.

➢ These findings suggest there is scope, and further interest in greater collaboration and supportive relationships in reaching common goals, particularly among faith groups, between faith groups and the voluntary sector, and between faith groups and statutory partners.

➢ The audit suggests action may also be needed to address reported barriers, challenges, anxieties and training needs associated with effective partnership working and support for social action. Barriers and challenges include: lack of faith group capacity; difficulties identifying and/or securing funding; lack of knowledge among faith groups about the role and priorities of the Council; and concerns that secular organisations may feel uncomfortable working with faith groups because of their religious basis.

➢ The most commonly reported information and training needs relate to developing stronger links with local councillors, caring for vulnerable adults and identifying and/or applying for funding. Faith groups also reported training and information needs in the areas of: health and safety; the Council's agendas, policies and strategies; how to lobby/influence policymakers; and about the roles and responsibilities of the local authority.

➢ A number of specific recommendations for consideration by statutory partners, faith groups and VCS membership organisations are presented in section 7 of this report.

2.   Introduction and Aims of the Audit

The 'Audit of Faith Group Activities and Community Projects in the London Borough of Sutton' project was commissioned in April 2013 by the Safer Sutton Partnership Service[1]. It was delivered by Northumbria University. The audit was designed to enable the London Borough of Sutton Council, faith based organisations and other stakeholders to better understand the nature and contribution of faith based social action and community activities, as well as the extent and ways in which these dovetail with the responsibilities and priorities of public agencies, including the London Borough of Sutton's Corporate Plan objectives of a safer, fairer, greener and smarter Borough. More specifically, the audit explored:

➢ the nature of faith groups operating in the London Borough of Sutton;

➢ the development of these faith groups over time;

➢ the activities undertaken and services provided by these faith groups;

➢ the relationship of these faith groups with the local authority and third and private sector organisations;

➢ the opportunities and challenges experienced by these faith based organisations;

➢ the resource, training and support needs of these faith groups.

3.   Research and Policy Context

This section of the report provides a brief summary of recent research and relevant policy developments with a view to contextualising the audit.

From the 1990s onwards, new opportunities have emerged for faith and, to a lesser extent, humanist engagement in policy development and service delivery. These include greater representation on partnership bodies, expanded consultative roles and the provision by faith-based organisations of state funded welfare services and initiatives. Such opportunities emerged in the context of previous UK Government agendas on partnership, democratic renewal, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism, together with the inclusion of 'religion and belief' in the Equality Act. At the local level, direct engagement and representation of faith groups on partnerships has taken place most notably in the context of Local Strategic Partnerships. Councils have also been encouraged to engage faith groups in developing local compacts, and to consult with them on various policy issues, including education and social cohesion. The Coalition Government's policies on localism, the Big Society, integration and deficit-reduction suggest a continued, if not increased, agenda for statutory partners to work in dialogue and partnership with the voluntary and community sectors (see HM Government, 2010).

---

[1]This is a multiagency partnership which includes the local authority and Police. It aims to improve community safety and tackle crime in the Borough.

Reflecting the above policy trends, there has been growing academic and policy interest in the existing and potential contribution of faith groups in society and the policy process (see Farnell et al, 2003; Furbey and Macey, 2005; Baker and Skinner, 2005; Farnell et al, 2006; Furbey et al, 2006; Grieve et al, 2007; NCVO, 2007; Chapman and Lowndes, 2008; Dinham et al, 2009). These, and other writers, have explored the contributions, impacts and challenges associated with the growing commitment on the part of policymakers to developing and supporting faith groups role in policy making, governance, social action and service delivery.

The contribution faith and wider voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups make ranges from social action and nurturing intra- and inter-faith cohesion and tolerance, to more externally focused efforts in regard to citizenship, participation and partnership. Social housing, youth activities, social care, food-banks and finance are just some of the areas in which faith groups have been particularly active. Research has identified BME and faith organisations as having a particularly crucial role in giving a voice to (and advocating for) marginalised groups, such as asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants (Craig et al, 2012). Their contribution is often motivated from their spiritual capital i.e. theology, worshiping traditions, value systems or moral visions (Baker and Skinner, 2005).

From a local authority perspective, engaging with faith groups can help statutory partners achieve their policy and/or broader societal goals, such as those linked to integration, community safety, the environment, active citizenship, effective and responsive service provision, and poverty reduction (see Chapman, 2012). It can also help councils to improve their understanding and accommodation of diverse needs and interests, meet equality and diversity requirements, and enhance their reputation and community relations. Previous research by Lowndes and Chapman summarises the basis for such a contribution in the form of a typology (2005; see also Chapman, 2012). This identifies the following three key dimensions of, or rationales for, engagement:

Normative – this stresses the role of faith groups in relation to community values and identities, linked to their theology or belief system and their enduring presence within communities. Values and principles such as peace, humanity, reconciliation, transformation, forgiveness, charity, trust, service to others and social justice, can underpin and motivate social action and the engagement of faith groups on governing bodies and partnerships. Where shared, these values can form a basis for cohesion and shared identities. Faith groups are also seen to offer a holistic perspective, concerning all aspects of community life (e.g. health, well-being, economic, cultural and social) that can transcend boundaries (such as age and social class) and time (i.e. due to their long-term presence in communities, which can counteract the short-termism of policy initiatives). They can work with councils to celebrate diversity and help keep statutory partners updated of what is going on in a local area.

Resources – this emphasises the organisational capacity of faith groups in developing members' skills, mobilising volunteers, providing staff and venues, and in reaching marginalised or excluded groups. By working together, councils and faith groups can: benefit from shared resources (including information, expertise, voluntary effort, buildings and finance), promote good practice (for example, in relation to safeguarding children or resilience planning) and gain wider access to faith, cultural and 'hard to reach' communities.

Governance – this stresses the representative and leadership role of faith groups inside communities and within broader policy networks and partnerships. Representatives from such groups can, for example, provide information and expertise on cultural, religious or other issues (such as those surrounding the voluntary and community sectors, migration, death, health care, child protection, community conflict, and faith hate crimes). They can also endeavour to speak on behalf of geographical, ethnic, cultural, vulnerable or faith based communities etc.

Effective faith engagement and partnership, however, can also be challenging and time consuming. Anxieties may emerge over proselytisation, equalities issues (particularly around sexuality and gender), the perceived privileging of faith groups regarding policy influence and funding, and the extent to which diversity of faith and no faith can be represented. Such challenges were explored in a Local Government Association funded research project entitled 'Faith and belief in partnership: Effective collaboration with local government'[2]. The associated research report identifies a range of strategies and approaches used by local authorities and faith groups to address challenges and to help build effective and trusting relationships (see Chapman, 2012).

The current policy and socioeconomic context presents both opportunities and challenges for local authorities working in partnership with, and supporting faith groups. It is prompting many to review and consider further scope for, and new ways of engaging with the voluntary and community sectors (VCS) and faith groups. An assessment of how faith groups contribute to community activity within Sutton, together with their relationship and impact upon the responsibilities and priorities of public agencies (particularly the local government), will provide a valuable insight into the potential for greater collaboration and supportive relationships between them.

Before outlining the audit methodology, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the religious composition of the Borough of Sutton. The 2011 census data[3] indicates that 58.4% of people in the Borough affiliate themselves with Christianity, with those affiliating with other religions comprising less than 10% of the Borough population (Hindu 4.2%, Muslim 4.1%, Buddhist 0.7%, Jewish 0.3%, Sikh 0.2%, other 0.4%). A further 24.6% of people in the Borough do not affiliate with any religion, and 7.1% did not state their religious affiliation.

---

[2] See: http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/3692893/PUBLICATION
[3]See:
http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=6275269&c=Sutton&d =13&e=62&g=6337492&i=1001x1003x1032x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1386837917640&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2479

4.   Audit Methodology

The audit comprised of a survey and interviews that explored a range of characteristics of faith groups based in the London Borough of Sutton, including:

- ➢ Development, type and size of faith groups and geographic areas where activities and projects took place;
- ➢ Details of activities and projects delivered;
- ➢ Collaboration with other agencies, groups and organisations;
- ➢ Use of social media and websites;
- ➢ Premises;
- ➢ Capacity, development and future plans.

The audit survey: This was developed by a team of researchers at Northumbria University, with input from representatives of the Council and the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum. A pilot survey was sent to 11 faith groups and amended in the light of feedback received. In September 2013 a final audit survey was sent either electronically (using SurveyMonkey software) or by post to 144 individuals from faith groups[4] identified using databases provided from the Council, which were augmented by the audit team. The survey asked respondents a range of questions about the characteristics of the faith group to which they belong (see above for details). Those contacted were asked to complete the audit survey within a period of three weeks. Non-responses were followed up by subsequent emails and telephone calls.

Response information: A total of 65 fully or partially completed surveys were returned from the 144 faith groups contacted. This equates to a response rate of 45%. Of the 56 respondents who provided details about the religion of their group, the majority (49/88%) stated they were Christian, three (5%) were Islamic, one (2%) was Buddhist, and three (5%) stated 'other'.

The interviews: The interview schedule was developed by the research team, with input from representatives of the Council and the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum. Semi-structured telephone interviews were undertaken with representatives of 12 faith groups during October and November 2013. Interviewees were selected from those 26 survey respondents indicating in the survey that they would be open to participating in an interview. Efforts were made to ensure that interviewees reflected the range of faiths that responded to the survey. Ten interviewees represented Christian faith groups, with one representing a Buddhist group and one an Islamic group.

Figure 2 below presents details of the denominations of faith groups participating in the audit (note: respondents could represent more than one faith and/or denomination).

---

[4] Definitions: the term faith group in this report refers to members of a religious organisation or group, including a worshiping community and/or faith-based organisation. Faith-based organisations include: places of worship (e.g. a church, temple or mosque) as well as voluntary and community organisations that are to some extent grounded in a faith tradition but which may serve the community more widely.

Figure 2: Percentage of survey respondents (n54) and interviewees (n12) representing relevant denomination(s).
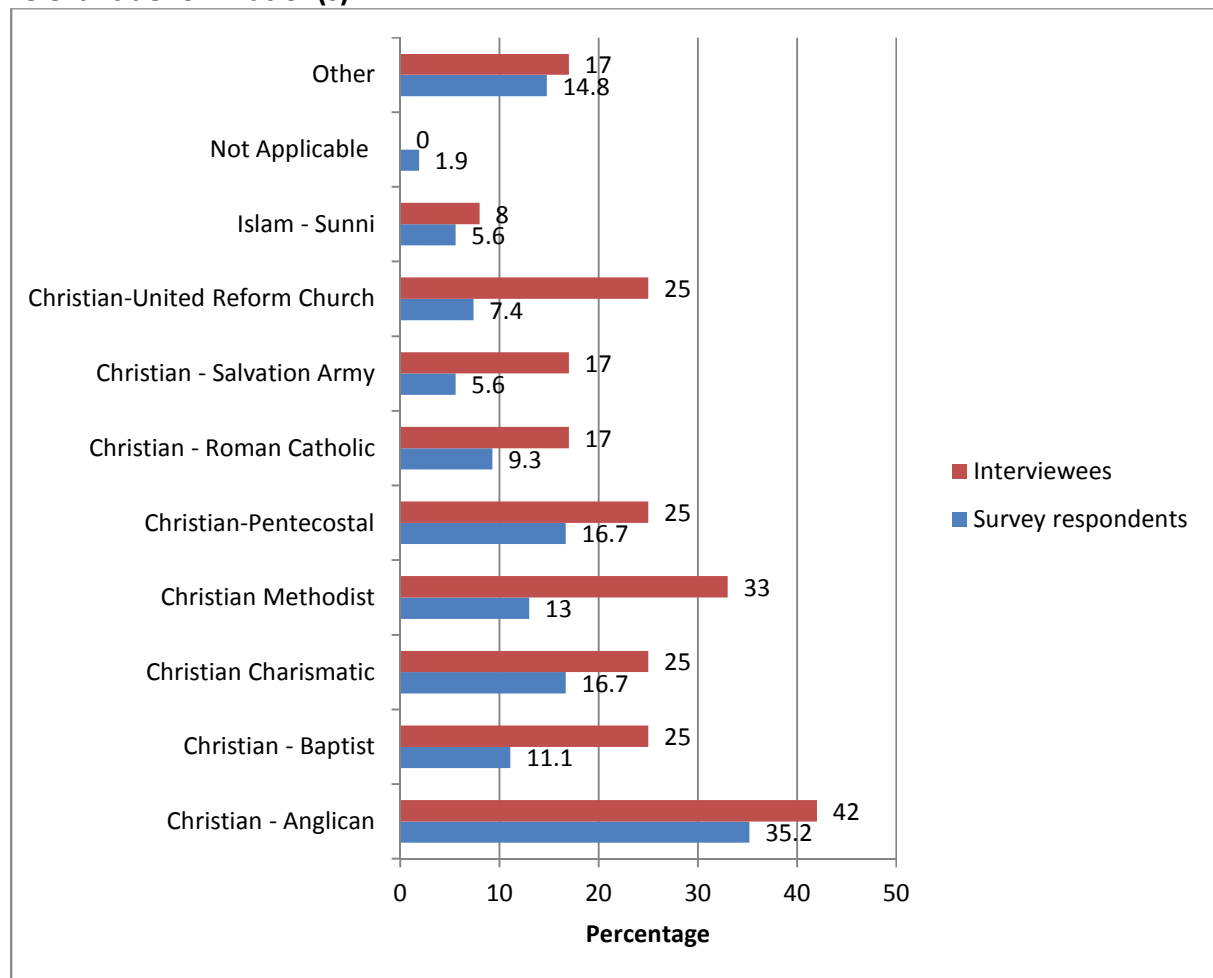
Interpretation of the data and findings: The intention of the audit was to canvass all Sutton faith groups listed on a contact database provided by the Council. The process did not involve a sample survey based audit, and so it is not feasible to reliably generalise beyond the audit respondents. When interpreting the data, it is therefore important to note that the findings reflect only the views and responses of individuals that completed the survey. Where total responses for any particular question is less than 65 (the number of fully or partially completed surveys returned), the views and responses only reflect those that answered the question concerned. Due to rounding of figures, some data may add up to a little over or under 100%.

5. Key Findings

This section presents findings from both the survey and interviews.

5.1 Nature, extent and contribution of faith group activities

Activity-users: Fifty-five survey respondents provided details about the activities and projects currently delivered by their faith group to specific groups of people. Figure 3 provides details of the percentage of respondents stating that their faith group delivers activities to specified groups of people.

Figure 3: Percentage of survey respondents stating that their faith group delivers activities and projects to specific groups of people (n55).
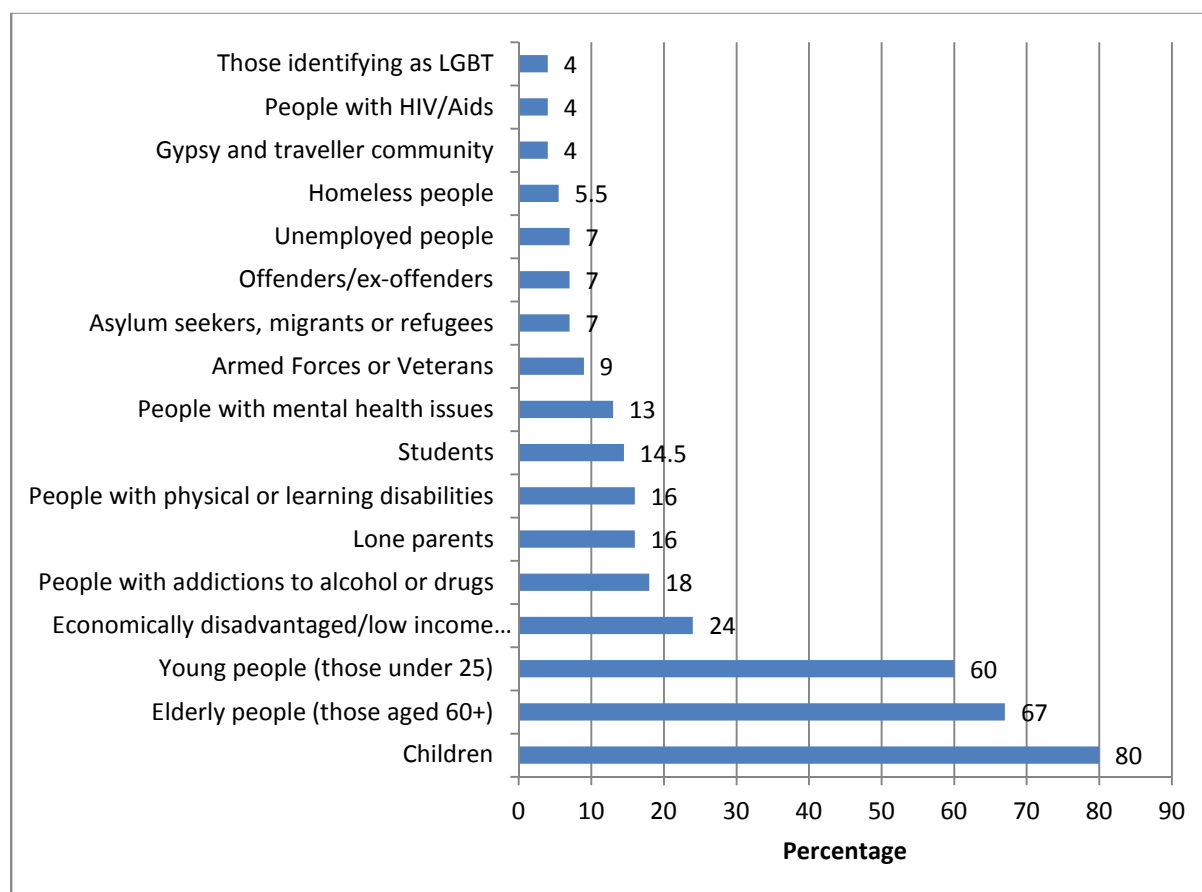
Activities and projects were most commonly provided for children (by 80% of faith groups), the elderly (those aged 60+) (by 67% of faith groups), and young people (those aged under 25) (by 60% of faith groups). Fewer than 10% of respondents stated that their faith group delivered activities or projects specifically for: members of the armed forces/veterans, asylum seekers, migrants or refugees, offenders/ex-offenders, the gypsy/traveller community, homeless people, those with HIV/Aids, people identifying as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgendered, or unemployed people. A total of 11% specified that their group

delivered activities and projects to groups not listed in Figure 3. These included activities for lonely people.

Activities delivered: The most commonly provided direct provision is 'religious or cultural activities', 'clubs, drop in's or groups for different people' and 'crèche/play groups'. Referral/signposting activity was most commonly undertaken in relation to financial advice, counselling, food-banks and advocacy.

Table 1 and Figure 4 below present details of direct provision delivered and signposting/referral activities by faith groups to link people to other provision.

Table 1: The frequency of survey respondents stating that their faith group delivers provision directly, or provides referral/signposting by activity type

Activity type	Direct provision	Referral/signpost
Advocacy	1	7
Arts or musical activities	12	2
Befriending/Visiting schemes	15	2
Café	10	0
Childcare	5	1
Clubs, Drop In's or Groups for different groups of people	29	1
Counselling	12	11
Creche/playgroups	25	1
Credit Union	0	5
Education or training	12	4
Financial advice (including advice about debt management and claiming benefits)	3	10
Food-bank	7	8
Health information or advice	0	3
Legal advice or services	0	1
Meals	16	0
Recreational, sport or fitness activities	10	1
Religious or cultural activities	36	2
Social care	2	2
Street Pastors	7	4
Transport	3	0
Volunteer or work placements	12	0
Other	4	0

Figure 4: The frequency of survey respondents stating that their faith group delivers relevant provision directly, or provides referral/signposting - by activity type.
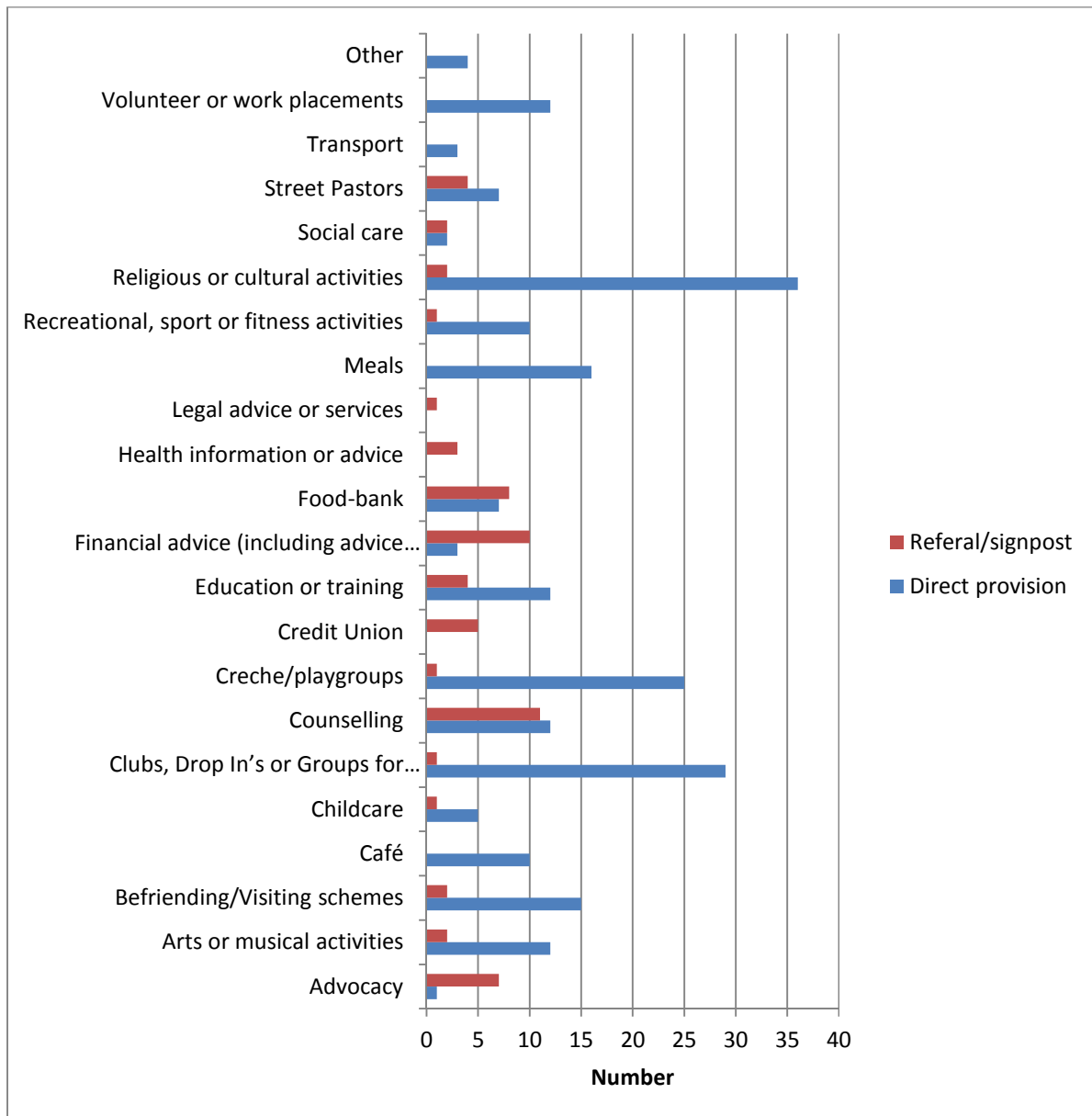
Respondents were asked whether *any* of the activities provided by their faith group were available to a specific faith, various faiths and/or those with no faith. A total of 54 answered this question. Across the activities and projects provided, 82% (44) respondents stated that some or all of their activities were offered to those with no faith, 78% (42) stated that some or all of their activities were offered to those of various faiths, and 26% (14) stated that they delivered activities and projects only to those of a specific faith[5].

Some activities and projects are provided in collaboration with other partners. Across the activities, collaborative work with other faith groups is more frequent in relation to food

---

[5]Note, faith groups may have more than one service or activity, which may be offered to varying groups; non-faith, various faiths and/or a specific faith.

banks, street pastors and religious and/or other cultural activities. Among those answering the question, there appears to be relatively little current direct partnership working with public sector organisations and private businesses (although 4 respondents stated that their faith group works with the private sector to provide recreational, sport or fitness activities). A breakdown of activities delivered collaboratively is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The frequency of survey respondents stating that their faith group delivers projects and activities collaboratively by type of activity.

| Activity type	Work with other local faith groups	Work with voluntary sector groups	Work with private businesses	Work with public sector organisations
Advocacy	1	1	0	1
Arts or musical activities	1	6	3	1
Befriending/Visiting schemes	1	4	0	0
Café	1	1	2	0
Childcare	0	1	1	1
Clubs, Drop In's or Groups for different groups of people	0	5	1	0
Counselling	0	2	1	0
Creche/playgroups	1	1	1	0
Credit Union	0	0	0	0
Education or training	1	2	2	2
Financial advice (including advice about debt management and claiming benefits)	2	0	0	0
Food-bank	9	4	0	0
Health information or advice	1	0	0	0
Legal advice or services	0	0	0	0
Meals	1	1	0	0
Recreational, sport or fitness activities	1	3	4	1
Religious or cultural activities	7	0	0	0
Social care	0	0	0	0
Street Pastors	8	3	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0
Volunteer or work placements	0	0	0	0
Other	1	2	0	1

Respondents were also asked for information about activities delivered by their faith group that specifically linked to five initiatives in the area; Aging Well, Living Well, Independent Living, Working with Young People and Safe Communities. Findings indicate that faith groups delivered provision specifically linked to each initiative, although the frequency of involvement varied across them. Table 3 and figure 5 below, indicate that a relatively higher number of respondents reported links in relation to initiatives on working with young people and aging well compared to other specified initiatives[6].

---

[6] It should be noted that several interviewees, appeared to regard one or more of the five specified initiatives as 'categories of activity', as opposed to more formalised policy initiatives. The actual extent of official engagement with the initiatives, therefore, may be different to that suggested here.

Table 3: The number of survey respondents stating that their faith group was involved in activities or community projects linked to specified initiatives.

Initiatives	Yes	No
Aging Well (activities for elderly people and to tackle social isolation)	22	14
Living Well (activities that encourage healthy active living)	11	18
Independent Living (activities aimed at vulnerable people or those less able to live independently)	4	20
Working with Young People (activities to support young people)	26	11
Safe Communities (activities to build closer, stronger, safer communities)	14	15

Figure 5: The percentage of respondents stating that their faith group was involved in activities or community projects linked to specific initiatives.
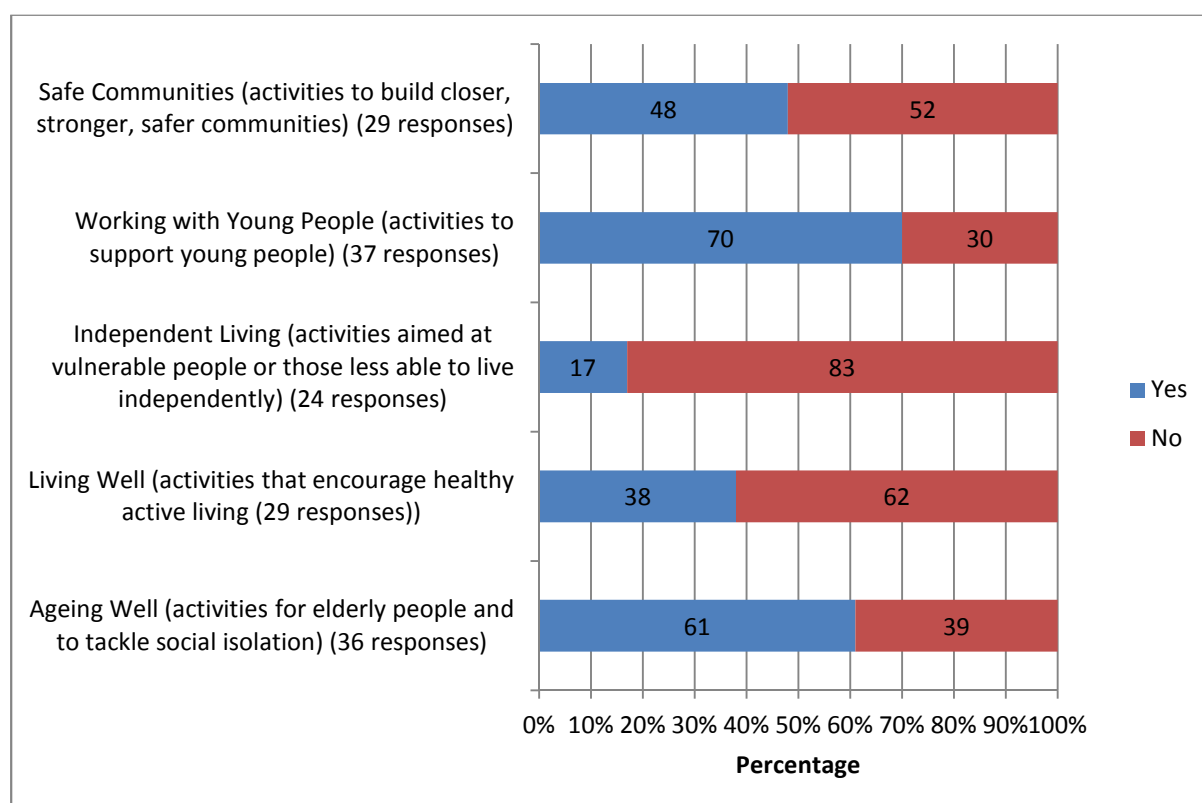
Interviews undertaken with 12 respondents yielded further information about the activities and projects delivered by their faith groups in Sutton and give some indication of their perceived significance and impact.

Faith groups were involved in one-to-one activities to support individuals with a wide range of issues including bereavement, terminal illness, isolation, debt and relationship difficulties. As one interviewee stated:

> "The nature of my job means I am regularly coming into contact with a whole variety of people in vulnerable situations; serious abuse, to financial deprivation to a relationship break-up, to dealing with people grieving because somebody's died".

Individuals and families being supported often have complex and multiple health, emotional care and support needs, as illustrated by one interviewee:

"We have an individual in their 70s who's struggling with (a terminal illness), but her grown up children in their 40s have a level of special needs; a level of special needs which are dwarfed by those of her grandchildren. So we're working with them about what does it mean when grandma passes on, how does the family continue to function and be mutually supportive to one another within the confines of some of the restrictions which are present day reality within the spirit of austerity which is all of ours to enjoy".

Interviewees reported little faith group activity specifically focused on members of the armed forces/veterans, asylum seekers, migrants or refugees, offenders/ex-offenders, the gypsy/traveller community, homeless people, those with HIV/Aids, people identifying as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgendered, or unemployed people. However, interviewees revealed a variety of activities are delivered on an ad hoc one-to-one basis to those seeking work, asylum seekers, offenders and homeless people to provide a listening service, signposting, support and accommodation. Interviewees discussed how members of their faith groups had: helped fellow members to develop CVs, held mock interviews, written character references for asylum-seekers and organised accommodation for homeless ex-offenders. These findings help illustrate a holistic, situational and relationship based support that faith groups often provide, as found in other research (see, for example, Lowndes and Chapman, 2005).

In addition to one-to-one interventions, the interviews identified a wide range of project-based and outreach activities delivered by faith groups, as well as examples of faith groups making their premises available to other local groups. These include the following:

Activities for children and young people: These comprised a range of groups and activities including: pre-school provision, crèche, art and craft activities, games and sports (including football, table tennis and snooker) music, sing-songs and dancing for children aged 5-11 and those aged 11+. This included targeted activities for children and young people living in specific parts of Sutton (with some faith groups bussing children from local estates to activities on a weekly basis).

Parent support: Activities for parents and children delivered by faith groups include parent and toddler groups, activities that enable children and their parents to undertake activities together (e.g. film clubs, painting and model-making) and groups for new mums and their babies. Parenting support provision includes specialist provision for disabled children and their parents. Support of this nature seeks to provide a safe space for sharing experiences and learning, as one interviewee commented:

"We want to provide a safe space where honest conversation is going to happen in order that parents can be the best parents they can be".

Social and physical activities for adults: These activities include running, fitness and dieting clubs/groups, art and craft activities, music groups, lunch clubs and dance groups.

Supporting social enterprise and employment: The Sutton Foodbank initiative also includes a social enterprise café (operated in partnership with the 'Family Mosaic' project) that provides opportunities to develop volunteer's work-readiness.

Outreach activities: Several interviewees discussed how members of their faith group work with local schools to deliver assemblies and how they input into lessons focused on religion, whilst others discussed how volunteers visit care homes to hold short services and also visit individuals in their own home (e.g. elderly people whose mobility is such they would find it difficult to travel to a place of worship). Interviews also identified examples of faith groups seeking to develop the wider community's understanding of faith by awareness-raising activities. One interviewee stated that:

> *"We have interface dialogues especially after 11 September when we thought that there is a need to go out and dispel the myths that there is one Islam. So we (have a) 'discover Islam' sort of exhibition type question stand…in the Sutton High Street".*

> *"We've invited a nursery next to the park [to our Eid celebration] and all the kids came out and joined us...[along with]…some of the public".*

Use of buildings by local groups: Several interviewees discussed how their faith group hired out their buildings to other groups, including Brownie, Girl Guide and Scout groups and to groups dedicated to those with Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

Participation in events: Several interviewees discussed how their faith group participated in events held in the Borough (e.g. environmental events and religious festivals).

Working with people in disadvantaged areas: A number of interviewees detailed how their faith group delivered activities focused on those living in disadvantaged localities within Sutton (particularly the St. Helier and Shanklin areas). This includes activities to help local people maintain their properties and gardens by carrying out minor repairs, and signposting people identified as 'in need' to wider local provision (e.g. local authority social services, the Sutton Housing Partnership, and the local Citizen Advice Bureau).

Although faith groups clearly undertake a significant number of activities, interviewees were clear that their faith group often lacked the expertise, volunteers, staff and time to respond to all the needs of those seeking their help (see faith group development, capacity and support needs section below for further discussion). They saw the role of their faith group as being part of a wider network of organisations, and to intervene directly where possible, but referring those they felt required further interventions to other relevant organisations when appropriate. As one interviewee commented:

> *"We are able to meet some of their needs, we're not able to meet others … we need to be part of the mosaic, which is required to support them".*

**Summary of key findings on the nature, extent and contribution of faith group activities**

➢ Among the respondents, activities and projects are most commonly provided for children, the elderly (those aged 60+), and young people (those aged under 25).

➢ Direct provision of the faith groups participating in the survey most commonly takes the form of 'religious or cultural activities', 'clubs, drop in's or groups for different people' and 'crèche/play groups'. Referral/signposting most commonly takes place in relation to financial advice, counselling, food-banks and advocacy.

➢ Faith groups are involved in one-to-one activities to support individuals with a wide range of issues including bereavement, terminal illness, isolation, debt and relationship difficulties. They can take a holistic approach to support with a view to helping individuals and families with complex and multiple health, emotional care and support needs.

➢ Links between faith group provision and local authority initiatives are more common in relation to initiatives on 'Working with Young People' (70% of respondents) and 'Aging Well' (61% of respondents), although between 38% and 48% of respondents also identified a link with 'Safe Communities' and 'Living Well' initiatives.

➢ Many faith group activities are offered to those of no religion or to various religions (78% or more of respondents indicated this). 26% stated that they delivered activities and projects only to those of a specific faith.

➢ Across the activities, collaborative work with other faith groups is more frequent among survey participants in relation to food banks, street pastors and religious and/or other cultural activities. There appears to be relatively little current direct partnership working with public sector organisations and private businesses.

➢ Interviewees were clear that their faith group often lacked the expertise, volunteers, staff and time to respond to all the needs of those seeking their help (see faith group development, capacity and support needs section for further discussion).

5.2 The characteristics of faith based project and service users

Number of service users (excluding worshiping activities): Thirty-nine survey respondents provided details about the number of individuals participating in/using activities or community projects delivered by their faith group each week (see figure 6 below). A total of 72% (28) respondents indicated that 50 or more people use or participate in their faith group activities or community projects each week, with 28% (11) stating 49 or fewer participants/users.

Figure 6: The percentage of respondents stating that the relevant number of people used activities or community projects provided by their faith group each week (n39).
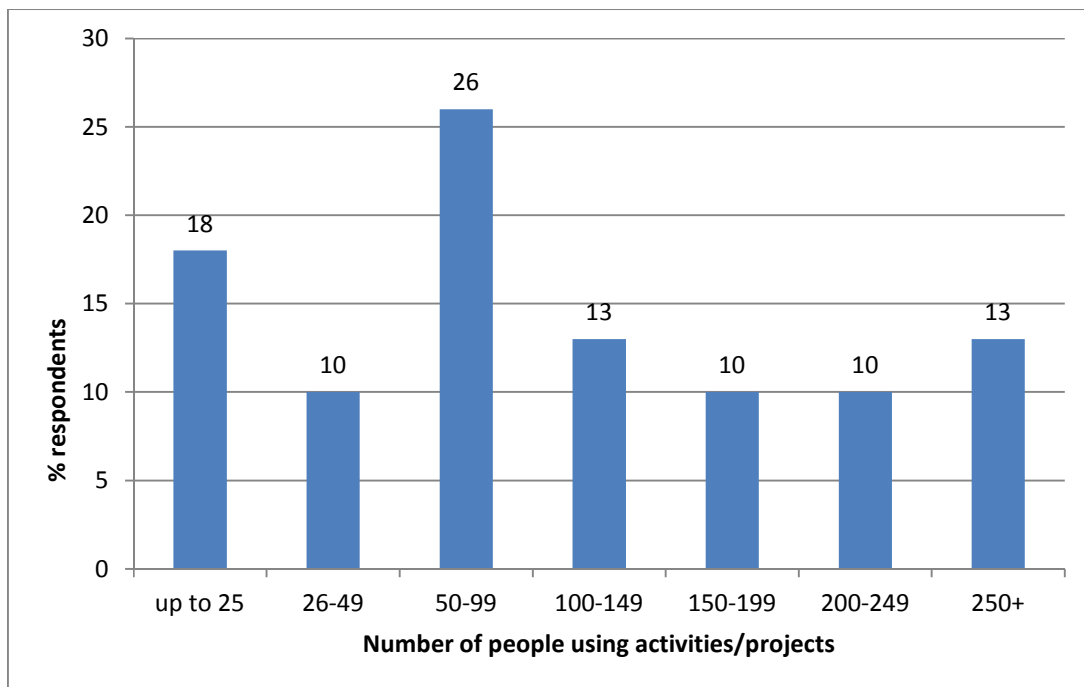
Age range of service/project users: Survey respondents reported fairly consistent levels of engagement with their activities and projects across the age ranges. More than 60% of survey respondents engaged with each of the following: 0-11 years old (67%); 12-17 years old (65%); 18-25 years old (61%); 26-35 years old (63%); 46-55 years old (63%); 56-65 years old (72%); and over 65 years old (78%). The exception was the 36-45 years old age range (54%).

Ethnicity and nationality of service/project users: Figure 7 below provides details of the ethnic backgrounds of those participating in faith group activities/community projects. Of the 46 survey respondents providing details, 83% (38) stated that some or all of their faith group's activities/community projects were provided to 'white-British' participants. Over 50% also stated that some or all of their faith group's activities/community projects were provided to 'white-other', 'mixed-white and black Caribbean', 'mixed-white and black African', 'black or black British-Caribbean' and 'black or black British-African' participants.

Figure 7: The percentage of survey respondents stating that their faith group's activities and community projects were used by members of specific ethnic groups (n46).
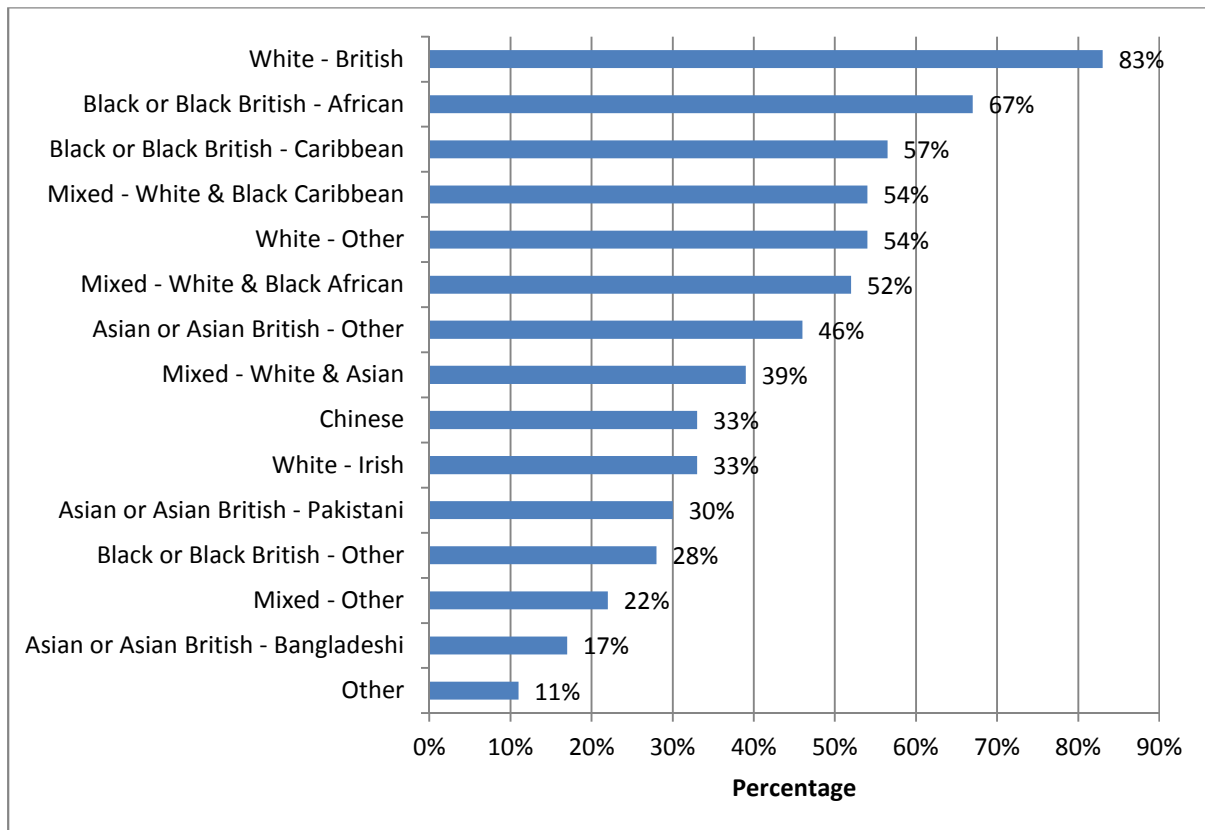
Thirty-one survey respondents provided details about the nationalities of those participating in or using activities and community based projects provided by their faith group (see table 4 below). Around 52% (16) stated that those using their faith group's activities included those of Indian nationality, 42% (13) stated that those using their faith group's activities included those of Polish nationality, and 36% (11) stated that those using their faith group's activities included those of Tamil heritage.

Table 4: The number and percentage of survey respondents stating that their faith group activities and community projects were used by members of the following nationalities.

Nationality	Response Percent	Response Count
Afghan	9.7%	3
Indian	51.6%	16
Korean	16.1%	5
Pakistani	32.3%	10
Filipino	16.1%	5
Polish	41.9%	13
Somali	9.7%	3
Tamil	35.5%	11
Other	25.8%	8

N=31 (note: respondents could select more than one answer)

5.3 The geographical location of provision

Geographical spread of activities and community based projects: A total of 44 respondents gave details of the postcode locations, within the Borough of Sutton, where their faith group delivered activities and community-based projects (see figure 8 for details).

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group delivered activities and community based projects in each of the relevant postcode areas listed below (n44).
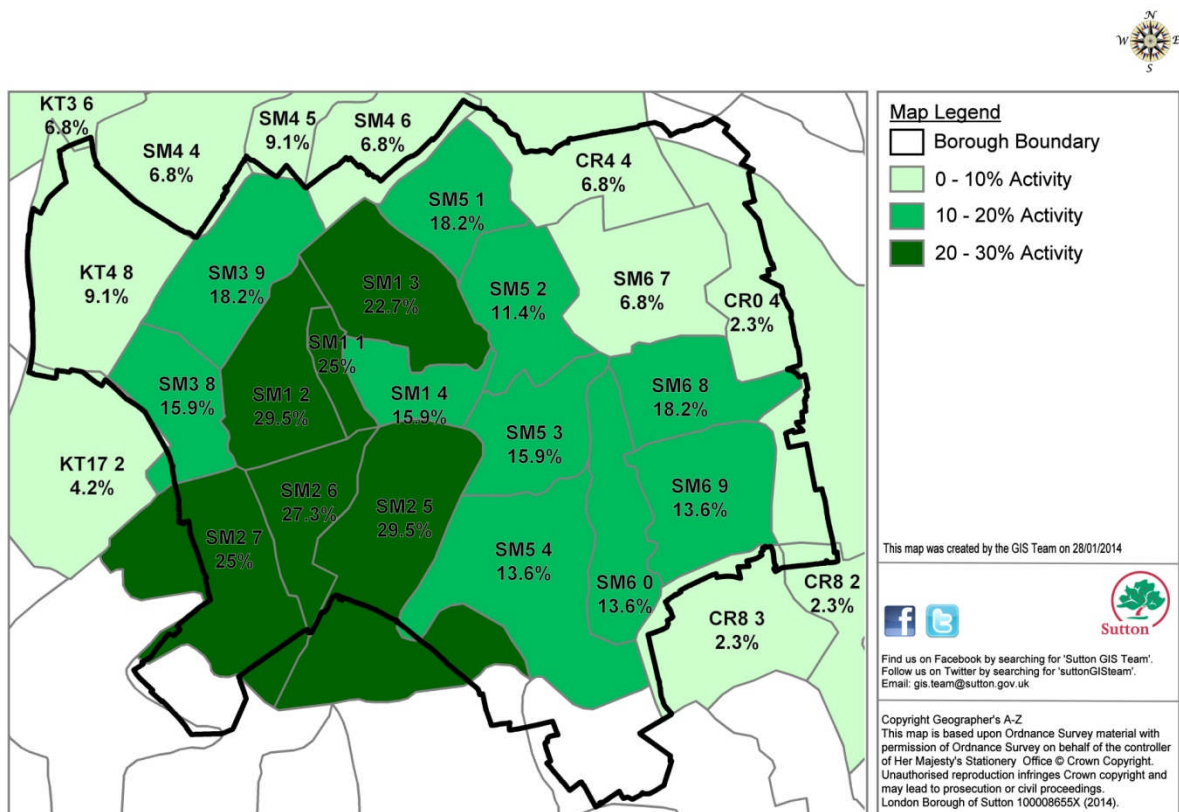
Between 25%-30% of organisations delivered activities *in each* of the following post-code areas:

- ➢ SM1 1;
- ➢ SM1 2;
- ➢ SM2 5;
- ➢ SM2 6;
- ➢ SM2 7

Less than 5% of survey respondents stated that their faith group delivered activities/community-based projects *in each* of the following post-code areas:

- ➢ CR0 4;
- ➢ CR8 2;
- ➢ CR8 3;
- ➢ KT17 2

Summary of key findings on the geographical location of provision

➢ Faith group activity is provided across several postcode areas, the most common being SM1 1, SM1 2, SM1 3 and SM2 5, SM2 6, SM2 7 where ten or more faith groups indicated provision of their activity.

5.4 Project and community activity staff and volunteers

Figure 9 below shows details about the number of *full-time staff* available to deliver community activities and projects. As can be seen, the majority of faith groups participating in the audit operate with between one and four full-time staff (49%/15), or no full-time staff (45%/14). Only 3% (1) of respondents stated that their faith group had 5 to 10 full-time staff, and a further 3% (1) between 11 to 15 full-time staff.

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group had the relevant number of full-time staff (n31).

Figure 10 below shows details about the number of *part-time staff* available to respondents to deliver community activities and projects.

Figure 10: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group had the relevant number of part-time staff (n33).
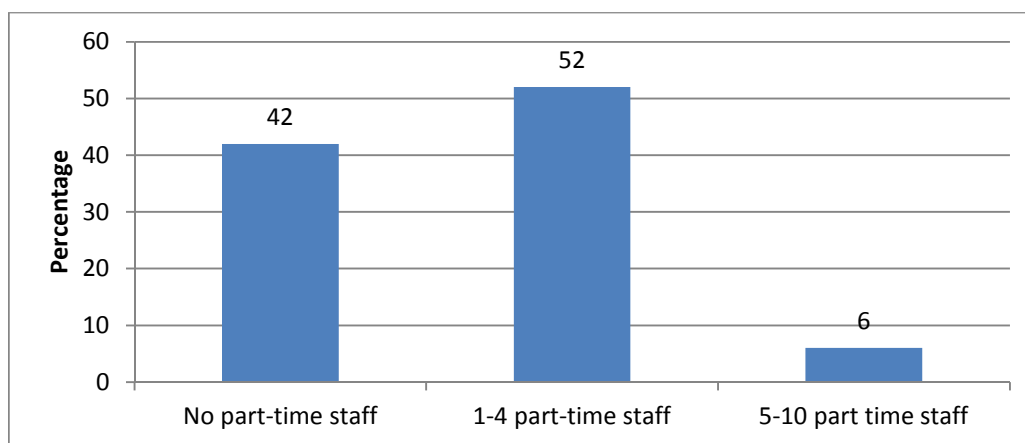
As can be seen, of the 33 survey respondents providing information about the number of *part-time staff* employed by their faith group to deliver activities and community projects:

➢ 42% (14) stated that their faith group had no part-time staff;

➢ 52% (17) stated that their faith group had 1-4 part-time staff;

➢ 6% (2) stated that their faith group had 5-10 part-time staff.

A total of 46 respondents provided details of the number of *volunteers* helping to deliver their faith group's activities and community projects. A total of 7% (3 respondents) stated that their faith group had no volunteers, 67% (31 respondents) stated their faith group had

between 1 and 49 volunteers and 26% (12 respondents) stated their faith group had 50 volunteers or more. See figure 11 below.

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents stating that the relevant number of volunteers helped to deliver activities and projects (n46).
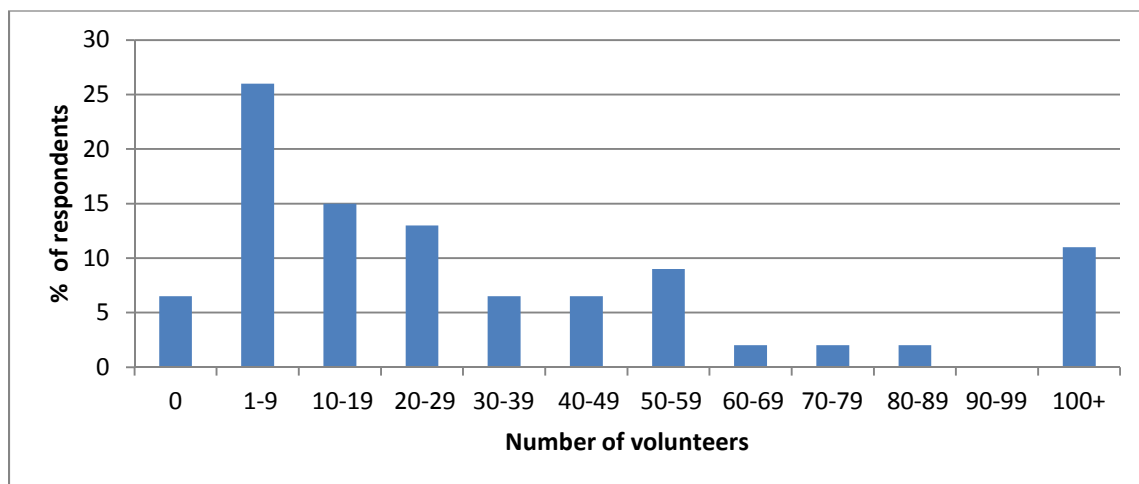
Of the 56 survey respondents providing details, 66% (37) stated that their faith group provided volunteers to other projects or activities delivered by other organisations/groups.

The interviews highlighted a key challenge facing faith groups is securing sufficient volunteers to enable them to maintain existing and develop future provision (see also section on faith group development, capacity and support needs below). The findings illustrate how crucial volunteers are to the effective operation of faith group activities. Several interviewees noted how members of their congregation included doctors, lawyers, teachers and professionals working in child protection upon whose knowledge core staff drew to respond to individuals in need (and signpost them to wider provision) as effectively as possible. These individuals also have been invaluable in enabling faith groups to better understand their legal duties and responsibilities (e.g. in relation to charitable status and volunteering). As one interviewee commented:

> "We have lawyers and we have people like that in the church so that we do get up to date things what's going on. For instance, it's quite hard to keep up to date with charity law, and as an organisation of our size, it is quite difficult to keep up to date with the latest employment things, volunteers, the legislation that affects people left, right and centre".

Securing committed, long-term volunteers was a particular issue. Contemporary life-styles and working patterns were felt to restrict the capacity of people to volunteer regularly (particularly mid-week). Limited volunteer resource was one reason why faith groups felt unable to develop the services they would like for specific groups (e.g. homeless people and offenders). There was also a general acknowledgement that volunteers cannot be asked to do too much. The following quotes from interviewees help to illustrate these points:

"There's still all these issues of trying to get the right volunteers and numbers".

"We mustn't push our people so hard. We mustn't encourage them so hard that they forsake their families and all that type of thing, so we have a little bit of a delicate balance there, where we have to be a little bit careful".

"We're always looking for more volunteers to be able to do community serving projects".

Summary of key findings on project and community activity staff and volunteers

➢ The findings indicate that faith groups participating in the audit tend to rely heavily on volunteers, although some have between one and four full- or part-time staff.

➢ The majority of faith groups participating in the audit operate with between 1-4 full-time staff (49%/15), or no full-time staff (45%/14). Many faith groups did not have part time staff i.e. 42% (14) of respondents, although 52% (17) had 1-4 part-time staff, and 6% (2) had 5-10 part-time staff.

➢ A total of 7% (3) of respondents stated that their faith group had no volunteers, 67% (31) stated between one and 49 volunteers and 26% (12) stated 50 volunteers or more.

➢ A key challenge facing faith groups is securing sufficient volunteers to enable them to maintain existing and develop future provision (see also section on faith group development, capacity and support needs).

5.5 Perceived contribution and outcomes

The interviews explored perceptions of the outcomes achieved by faith group activities. Unless required by funders, the findings suggest that faith groups do not generally use detailed performance monitoring frameworks typical of statutory agencies (with associated indicators, outputs and outcomes) to measure their activities. However, interviewees did discuss the various ways in which they felt faith group activities had positive impacts. These impacts generally include maintaining and improving individual, family and community well-being, as the following suggests:

➢ Supporting health and wellbeing by reducing isolation. This involves providing opportunities, for those who may not have extended families nearby, to meet and make friends and share advice and life experiences;

➢ Supporting family functioning by working with families in need and/or engaging other services on their behalf;

➢ Assisting child-development by offering children opportunities to develop friendships, take part in structured activities and games and develop the skills needed to participate effectively;

- Supporting potentially alienated adolescents to make a successful transition into adulthood by providing activities and safe spaces where they can share experiences, improve their confidence by undertaking activities they are good at, and where they can develop positive relationships with each other;

- Helping to ameliorate the impacts of poverty via participation in a food-bank initiative which helps relevant individuals who are experiencing a crisis situation;

- Helping to reduce social exclusion by providing activities for those living in parts of Sutton that are socio-economically deprived and where access to wider service provision may be relatively limited; and via the Street Pastor initiative that provides an opportunity for faith group members to access those who might be homeless;

- Contributing to community safety through the Street Pastor initiative (Sutton Street Pastors patrol on Friday and Saturday nights and are designed to act as a visible presence on the streets contributing to a safer Sutton). Pastors are able to call friends, relatives and taxis for those intoxicated so they can get safely home. In turn this reduces the need for, and associated cost, of emergency services involvement.

- Contributing to community cohesion by organising or participating in cross-cultural and multi- faith events and promotional activities designed to bring people of different faiths together and promote mutual understanding (e.g. social events/parties and 'on street' promotion).


Summary of key findings on perceived contribution and outcomes

- Interviewees reported a range of project outcomes focused around maintaining and im-proving individual, family and community well-being and cohesion e.g. through reducing isolation, assisting child-development, supporting potentially alienated adolescents, re-lieving the impacts of poverty, provision of a Street Pastor initiative and cross-cultural and multi- faith events.

5.6 Faith group development, capacity and support needs

The survey included questions that explored the development of, and changes experienced by faith groups in the previous two years. The most commonly reported *increases* relate to the volume and range of activities and community projects delivered (40% to 49% of respondents reported an increase), membership base (44% of respondents), the number of people engaging with activities/community projects (45% of respondents) and volunteers (38% of respondents) (see figure 12 below). This appears to suggest some growth in faith based social action provision among the audit respondents at least. For the majority of respondents, local authority and contract and commissioning funding was not seen to be relevant.

Figure 12: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group has experienced the relevant changes in the last two years.
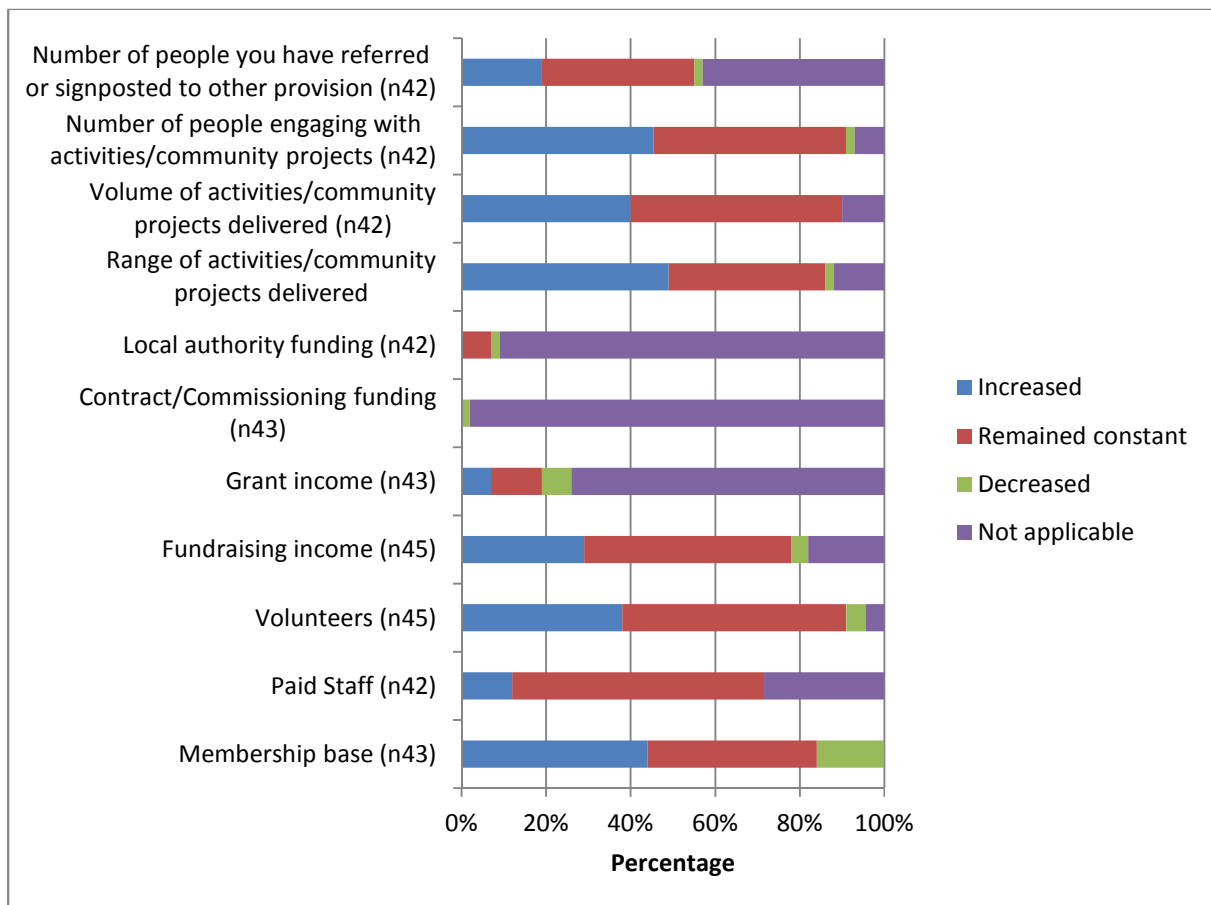
The survey asked respondents to identify any capacity constraints experienced by their faith group. Thirty-three respondents provided such information. The most common capacity constraint was too few volunteers (82%/27), too few members of staff (52%/17) and lack of time (49%/16). Around one-third of respondents stated that their faith group faced: difficulties identifying and/or securing funding, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of information about local council agendas, policies or strategies, and difficulties arising from a lack of staff or volunteers with sufficient skills. Approximately 25% to 27% stated that their faith group had premises that made access for potential service users difficult, and that their group lacked information about the role and responsibilities of the local council. These capacity constraints can act as a barrier to developments in faith-based social action and partnership working, including with statutory partners.

A total of twenty-one respondents provided details about their faith group's information and training needs. Details about these information and training needs are presented in figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Percentage of survey respondents providing details about their faith group's information and training needs (n21).
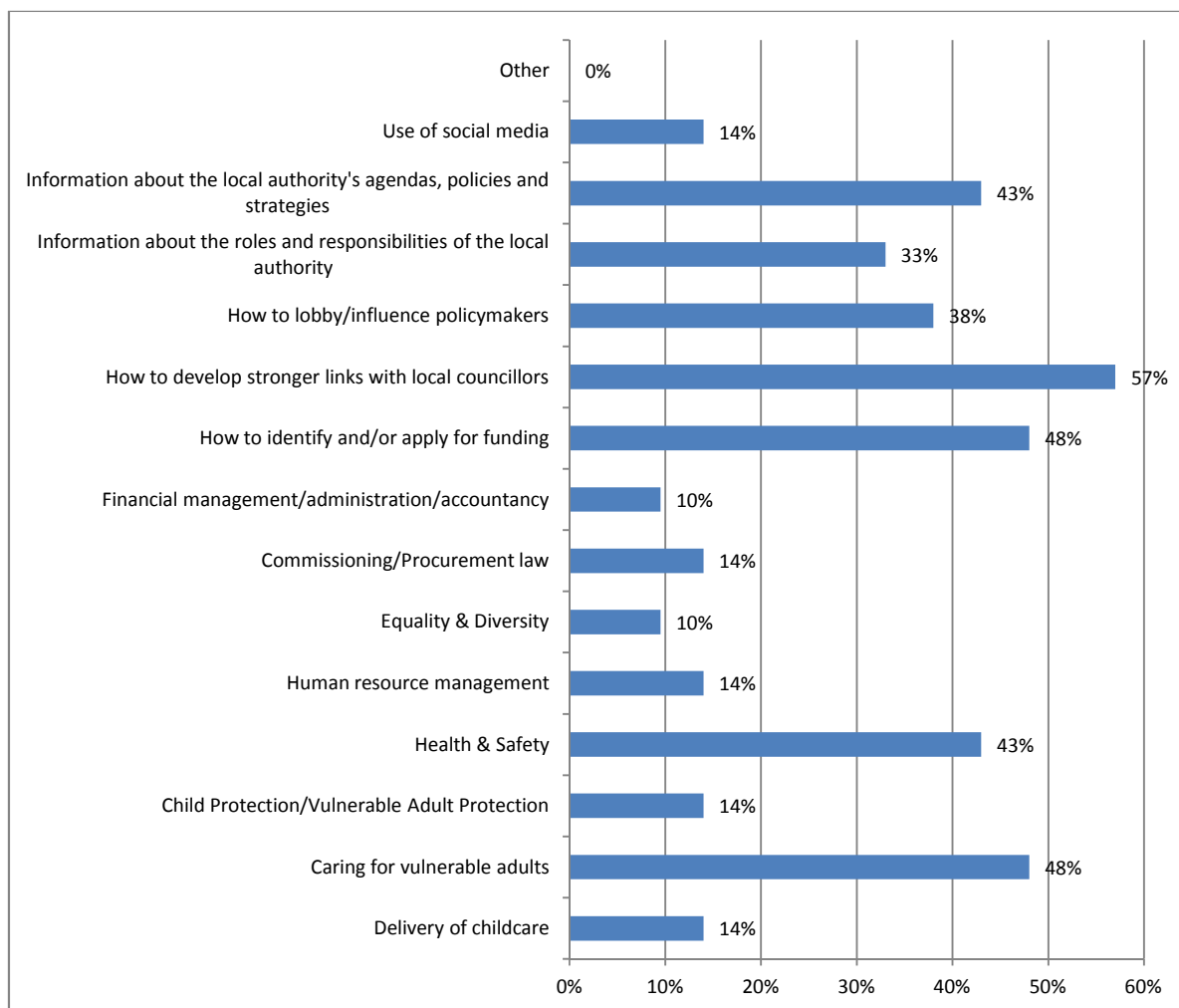
Results presented in figure 13 indicate the most common information and training needs to be in relation to developing stronger links with local councillors (57%/12), caring for vulnerable adults (48%/10) and how to identify and/or apply for funding (48%/10). Approximately 43% of respondents also stated that their faith group had information or training needs in relation to health and safety and information about the Council's agendas, policies and strategies. Between 33% and 38% felt their faith group had information or training needs around how to lobby/influence policymakers and about the roles and responsibilities of the local authority. Between 9% and 15% felt their faith group had training or information needs concerning: the delivery of childcare, child protection and vulnerable adult protection, human resource management, equality and diversity, commissioning/procurement law, financial management, administration and accountancy, and the use of social media. Guidance and publications on these, and related matters can be found on VCS and faith based organisation websites, including those by the Faith Based Regeneration Network, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Inter Faith Network for the UK, and the Church Urban Fund. The East of England Faiths Council website also offers guidance on a range of subjects, including guidance aimed at local councillors and

faith groups wishing to develop stronger links. This particular guidance covers possible reasons for developing stronger links, potential benefits and practicalities of engagement[7].

Our interviews explored the capacity constraints and challenges facing faith groups and identified the following issues:

Partnership working: Although partnership working was recognised as potentially beneficial, it was not without its challenges (see below for further discussion).

Volunteer resources: As already discussed above, the interviews highlighted a key challenge facing faith groups is securing sufficient volunteers to enable them to maintain existing and develop future provision.

Venues: Interviewees revealed a somewhat mixed picture in relation the availability of venues from which faith groups might deliver activities. Whilst some interviewees believed they had access to suitable venues (with some saying that they felt that liaison with statutory agencies had resulted in them securing premises), others felt that the lack of their own building was restricting the ability of their group to deliver the activities they would like. Some interviewees expressed a wish to work with statutory agencies to identify potential venues and discuss related cost issues.

Funding and maintaining faith group ethos and values: Several interviewees discussed the challenges of ensuring that their faith group maintains its original ethos and values, whilst also responding as effectively as possible to commissioning by statutory partners. In the wider research literature, related concerns have been identified across the UK regarding a lack of understanding of faith group beliefs, motivations and language, potential funding discrimination and concerns surrounding proselytisation (see Chapman, 2012). Such issues can hinder engagement and trust between statutory partners and faith groups.

Policy awareness and compliance: Interviews revealed a mixed picture in relation to awareness of wider policy and its implications for faith groups. Some respondents felt that their faith group was sufficiently aware of local policy agendas and the role of their group within these agendas. However, others felt that they ideally needed to be more aware of local policy agendas and the position of their faith group within them. As one interviewee commented:

> *"We don't know enough about it (local policy agendas) and we don't know where we really fit into all of that".*

Some interviewees expressed their frustration at what they felt were conflicting policies facing their faith group. For example, one interviewee discussed their perception of a clash between health and safety policies and equality requirements that made it difficult to know how best to engage and support staff and volunteers with mobility issues within legal and good practice guidelines.

---

[7]The websites can be found at: http://www.fbrn.org.uk/; http://www.ncvo.org.uk/; http://www.cuf.org.uk/about/what-we-do/research/search; http://www.eefaithscouncil.org.uk/; http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/index.htm

Service commissioning: Financial support to civil society organisations by councils has traditionally taken the form of grant funding, i.e. where a specific amount of funding is given to an organisation to undertake a particular activity. More recently, public sector reforms have led to increasing moves towards commissioning, involving a process whereby councils assess the needs of the locality or client group and arrange to meet relevant service delivery activities through a procurement process. This can involve awarding grants and/or contracts to civil society organisations. For those groups heavily reliant on statutory funding or grants from external organisations, changes to statutory agencies' commissioning policies were creating significant challenges. Some of these groups argued that they were too small to bid (as a primary provider) for commissioned activities that might have replaced the income they had previously received via grants. Consequently, this change to funding was felt to be compromising the long-term viability of at least some faith group activities in the Borough that were reliant on grant funding as a key source of income. Similar frustrations have been reported in other research across the UK (see Chapman, 2012). It was felt that some faith groups did not have the necessary skills to respond to the shift from grant aid to contracting and commissioning. The Local Government Association report 'Faith and Belief in Partnership: Effective Collaboration with Local Government (Chapman, 2012) identifies a number of approaches used by local authorities to help address such issues. These include: having a mix of contracting and grant aid funding; involving faith groups, alongside other VCS groups, in the setting of priorities for commissioning and in the delivery of services where there is no conflict of interest; signposting faith groups to other resources and funding sources; offering non-financial support for faith based social action e.g. use of buildings and office space; and the sharing of information and expertise. The report suggested that good practice case studies and one-to-one tailored advice, coaching and mentoring designed to help a faith group with their particular situation are highly valued by faith based organisations as forms of non-financial support.

Summary of key findings on faith group development, capacity and support needs

➢ The survey included questions that explored the development of, and changes experienced by faith groups in the previous two years. The most commonly reported *increases* relate to the range and volume of activities and community projects delivered, membership base and the number of people engaging with activities/community projects.

➢ For the majority of respondents, local authority and contract and commissioning funding was not seen to be relevant. Some interviewees suggested that they were too small to bid (as a primary provider) for commissioned activities. Consequently, the shift in funding from grants to contract and commissioning is seen to be compromising the long-term viability of some faith group activities in the Borough that were more dependent on grant funding and are not in a position to get involved in commissioning.

➢ Faith groups experience a range of capacity constraints. The most commonly reported among the respondents are: too few volunteers (82%), too few members of staff (52%) and lack of time (49%). Around one-third also stated that their faith group experienced difficulties in respect of: identifying and/or securing funding, infrastructure, a lack of in-

formation about local council agendas, policies or strategies, and difficulties arising from a lack of appropriately-skilled staff and/or volunteers. These capacity constraints can act as a barrier to developments in faith-based social action and partnership working with others, including statutory partners.

➢ The most common information and training needs are in relation to developing stronger links with local councillors (57% of respondents), caring for vulnerable adults (48% of respondents) and how to identify and/or apply for funding (48% of respondents). Between 33% and 43% of respondents also stated that their faith group had information or training needs in relation to health and safety and/or information about the Council's role/responsibilities, agendas, policies and strategies and about how to lobby/influence policymakers.

5.7 Websites and social media

Of a total of 47 survey respondents, 89% (42) stated that their faith group had its own website, with 11% (5) stating that they did not (see figure 14 below).

Figure 14: Percentage of survey respondents stating that their faith group had or did not have its own website (n47).
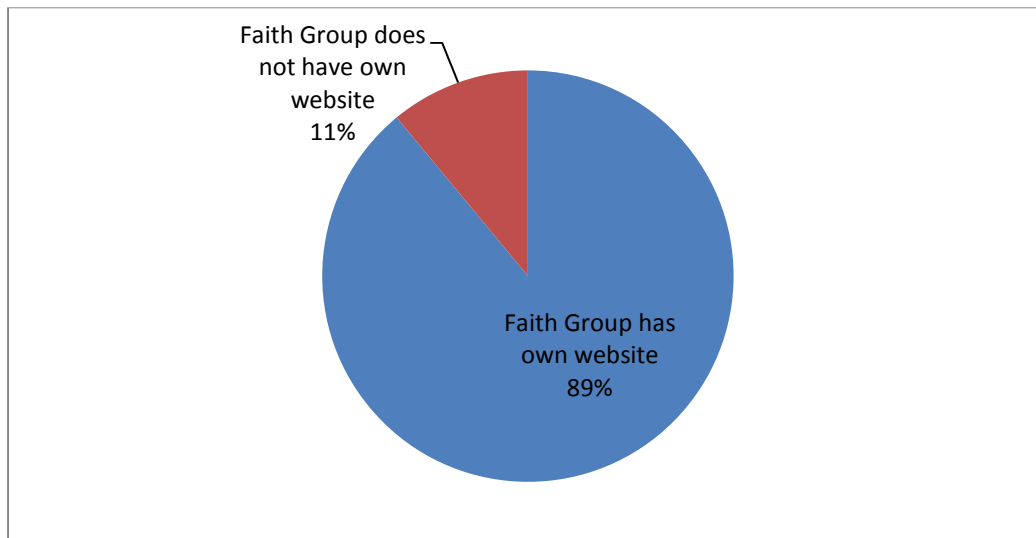
Of 41 survey respondents, 46% (19) stated that their group used Facebook and 32% (13) that their group used Twitter, with less than 10% stating that their group used either Blogger, Google+ or Myspace. None of the 41 respondents reported their faith group as using Bebo or Stumbleupon. Of 21 survey respondents, just 14% (3) stated that they had training or information needs relating to the use of social media.

The interviews suggest some faith groups realise the potential value of websites and social media for promotion (rather than communication) activities. Examples were given of faith groups using websites to provide opportunities for local people to offer feedback via online surveys. Some groups are clearly keen to use social media to engage young people.

However, social media was not regarded as an appropriate substitute for face-to-face contact and there were concerns that an over-reliance on social media might exclude those for whom it was unfamiliar. Where groups chose not to use social media, this was due to concerns about managing and ensuring the appropriateness of communication and content. As one interviewee stated:

> *"I don't join any of those things [social media sites] because I don't want it to get out of control, we certainly don't use Twitter or social networks. We restrict ourselves to talking to each other on the phone [and] face-to-face meetings, which is the most important".*

Summary of key findings on websites and social media

➢ The majority of respondents (89%) stated that their faith group had its own website. Some groups also use Facebook (46%) and Twitter (32%). Interviews suggest some faith groups acknowledge the potential value of websites and social media for promotion (rather than communication) activities. However, social media was not regarded as an appropriate substitute for face-to-face contact and there were concerns that an over-reliance on social media might exclude those for whom it was unfamiliar.

5.8 Faith group premises

Type of premises: Figure 15 below, shows that of 47 survey respondents providing details, approximately 72% (34) delivered some or all of their activities and projects from their own premises; 13% (6) delivered some or all of their activities and projects in specific rooms within shared premises; and 11% (5) delivered some or all of their activities and projects in shared rooms within shared premises (see figure 15 below).

Figure 15: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group delivered activities/projects in the relevant type of premises (n47).
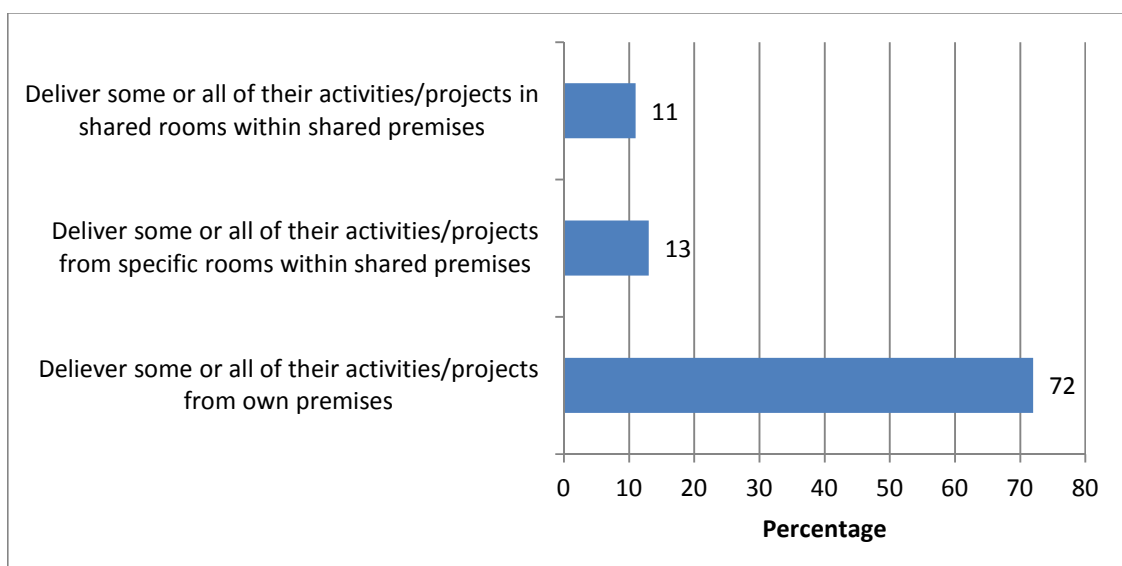
Wheelchair accessibility: Of 47 survey respondents giving details, approximately 71% (33) described their group's premises as fully accessible to wheelchair users, with 21% (10) describing them as partially accessible and 6% (3) not accessible. The remaining 2% (1) did not know (see figure 16 below).

Figure 16: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group's premises were fully/partially/not accessible to wheelchair users (n47).
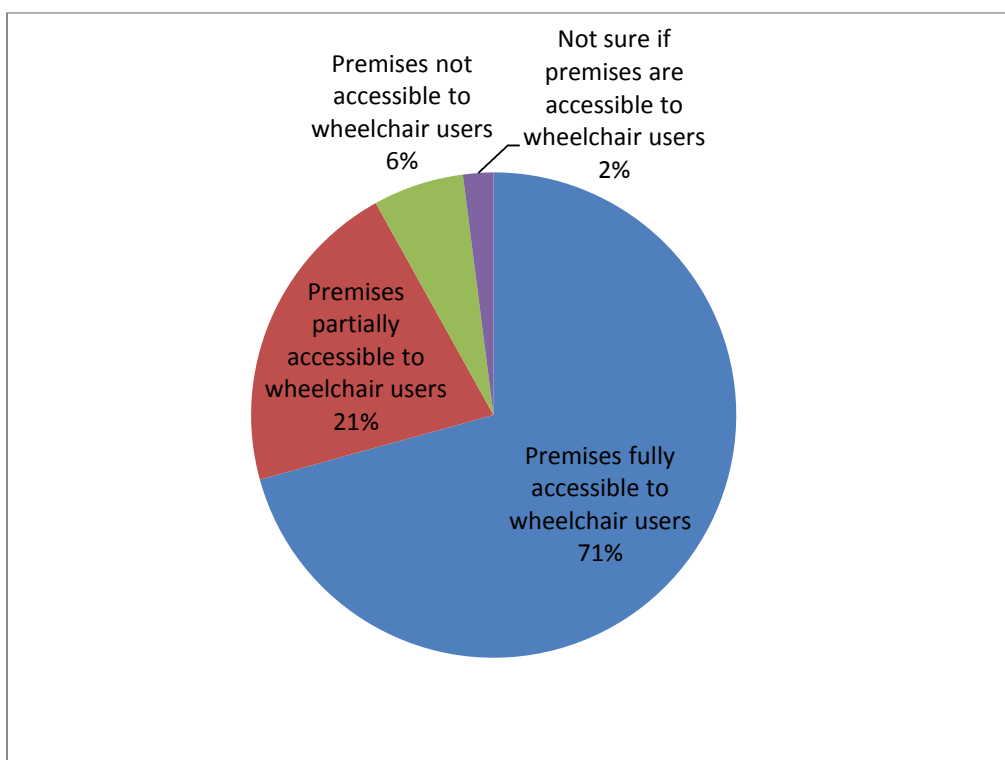
Hearing Loop: Figure 17 below, shows that of 43 survey respondents providing details, 37% (16) stated that all their premises had a hearing loop system, 33% (14) stated that some of their premises had a hearing loop system, and approximately 30% (13) stated their premises did not have a hearing loop system.

Figure 17: Percentage of faith group respondents stating that their faith group's premises have a hearing loop system (n43).
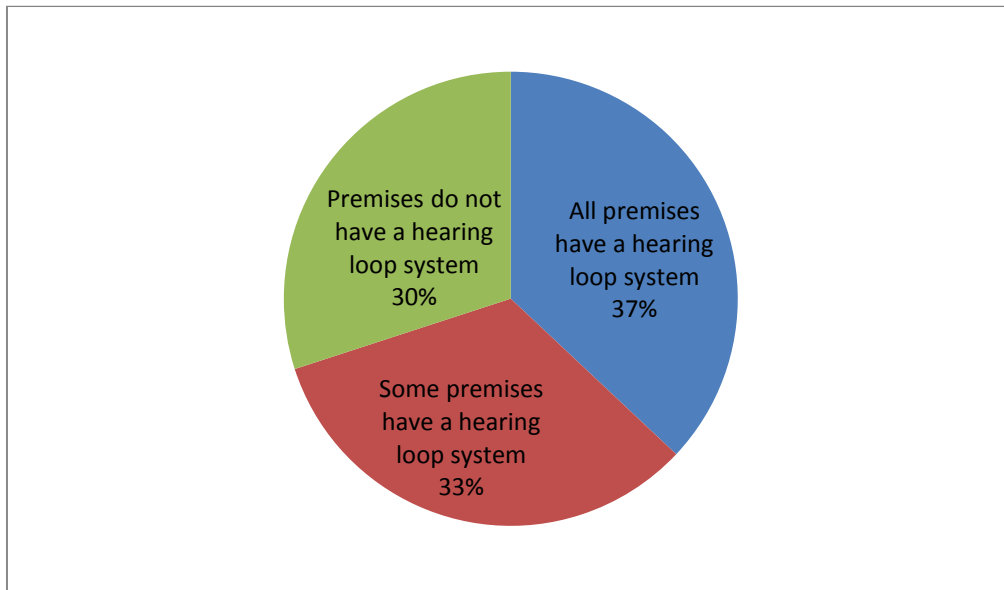
Parking spaces: Figure 18 below, shows that of 42 survey respondents providing details, 65% (27) stated that their premises all had parking spaces, 14% (6) stated that some of their premises had parking spaces and 21% (9) stated that none of their premises had parking spaces. Approximately 67% (28 out of 42) stated that disabled car parking facilities were available on-site or nearby, compared to 29% (12 out of 42) that did not.

Figure 18: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group premises have the relevant parking provision (n42).

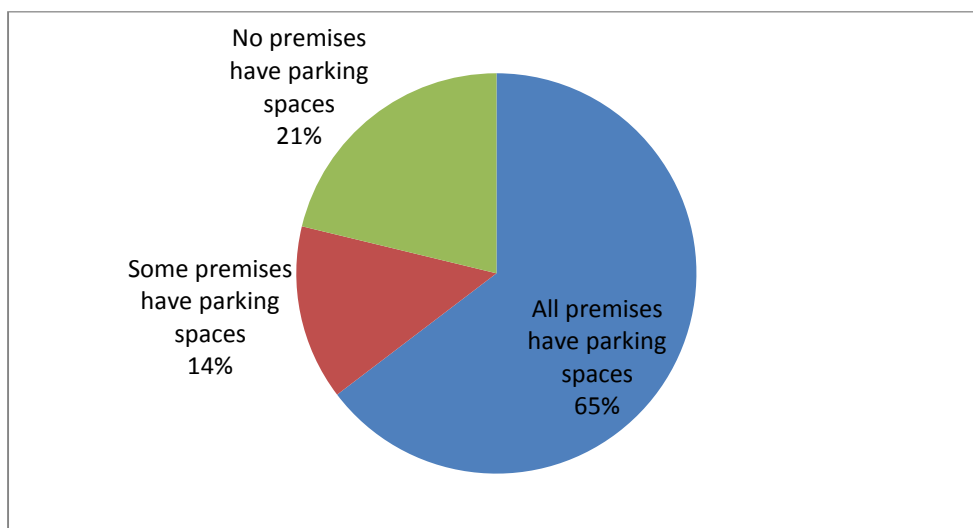**Room hire:** Of 47 respondents, 28 (59%) stated that they had rooms available for hire by other community groups or individuals for their activities or meetings; seven (15%) did not. A further six respondents (13%) indicated that their faith group would consider hiring out

rooms to other community groups or individuals, and six (13%) reported this was not applicable (see figure 19 below).

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents providing relevant details regarding availability of rooms to hire by community groups or individuals for their activities/meetings (n47).
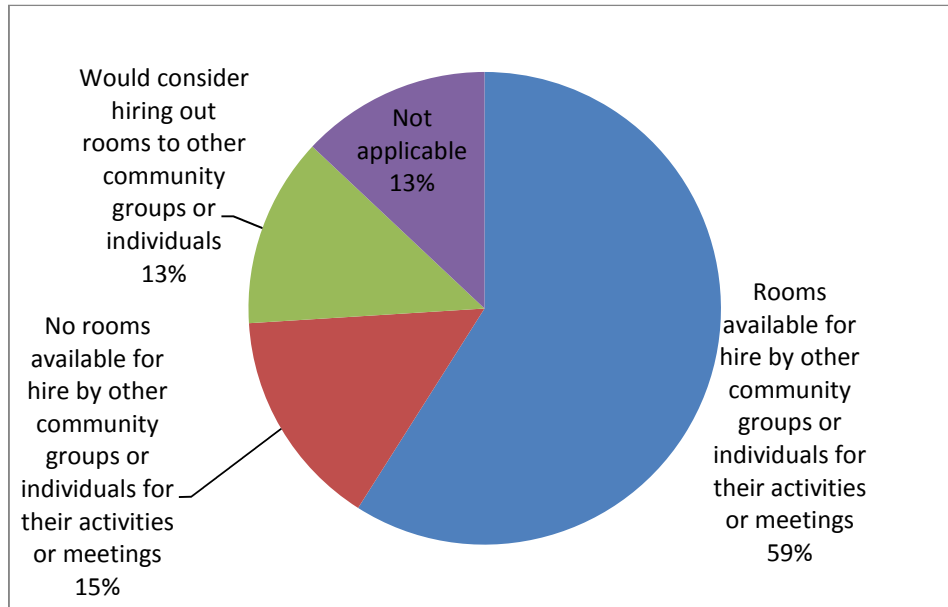
Figure 20 below, shows that out of 44 respondents, 22 (50%) had rooms that could be hired for private functions or social events, and 10 (23%) did not. A further four respondents (9%) indicated that their faith group would consider hiring out rooms for private functions or social events, and eight (18%) reported this was not applicable.

Figure 20: Percentage of respondents providing information about the hire of their premises for private/social functions (n44).

> **Summary of key findings on faith group premises**
>
> ➢ The majority of participating faith groups (72%) deliver some or all of their activities and projects from their own premises. Premises often are fully accessible to wheelchair users (71% reported this), although hearing loop availability is less common (around 37% of respondents indicate that all of their premises have this). The availability of parking could be an issue for some faith groups given that 21% of respondents indicate that none of their premises have any.
>
> ➢ Faith groups sometimes hire rooms to other groups. Over half of the faith groups participating in the audit indicated that they had rooms available for hire by other community groups or individuals for their activities or meetings (59%) and/or private functions or social events (50%). A minority that did not currently hire out rooms suggested that they would consider it (13%).

5.9 Networking, partnership working and collaboration

Sutton Faith and Belief Forum: Of 45 survey respondents providing details, 78% (35) were aware of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum, with 22% (10) stating they were not. Of 46 respondents, 26% (12) stated that their group engages with the Forum, compared to 74% (34) who stated their faith group does not. The importance of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum was acknowledged by interviewees as valuable in terms of engaging those of different faiths and beliefs and as a means of sharing information between its members about relevant policy initiatives. One interviewee stated that the Forum was valuable as it supported:

> *"All the faiths and beliefs coming together in the area to have open dialogue and to interact and do activities together for community cohesiveness…It's basically getting all the faiths together and understanding each other."*

However, it was felt that more resources were needed to develop this role further.

In general, local inter-faith forums provide a means by which people from different faiths (and possibly none) can come together to discuss and, in some cases, take action on topics and issues of interest. Activities often include:

➢ Encouraging/arranging dialogue and encounter between members of different faiths;
➢ Holding meetings and events on religious or social issues;
➢ Building good community relations and cohesion;
➢ Awareness raising about faiths;
➢ Disseminating information to faith and inter faith initiatives via a newsletter, website, or electronic circulars (see LGA, 2008).

They often also provide a point of contact for local authorities wishing to consult with faith groups. The Local Government Association, in partnership with the Inter Faith Network, conducted a survey of local authorities to look at how they were working with faith groups

and inter faith organisations in their area (see LGA, 2008). The report, published in 2008, indicated that the majority (76%) of authorities that have a local inter-faith forum consulted with it on local policy matters. The survey also prompted respondents to highlight examples of good practice and flagged up particular challenges. If not already done so, it may be worth reviewing this report with a view to reflecting on partnership working between the Council and Sutton Faith and Belief Forum.

Links with local faith schools: Figure 21 below, shows that 20 (53%) out of 38 respondents stated that their faith group currently had an association or relationship with a local faith school/s, whereas 18 (47%) stated that they currently had no associations or relationships with local faith schools.

Figure 21: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group had/did not have associations or relationships with faith schools (n38).
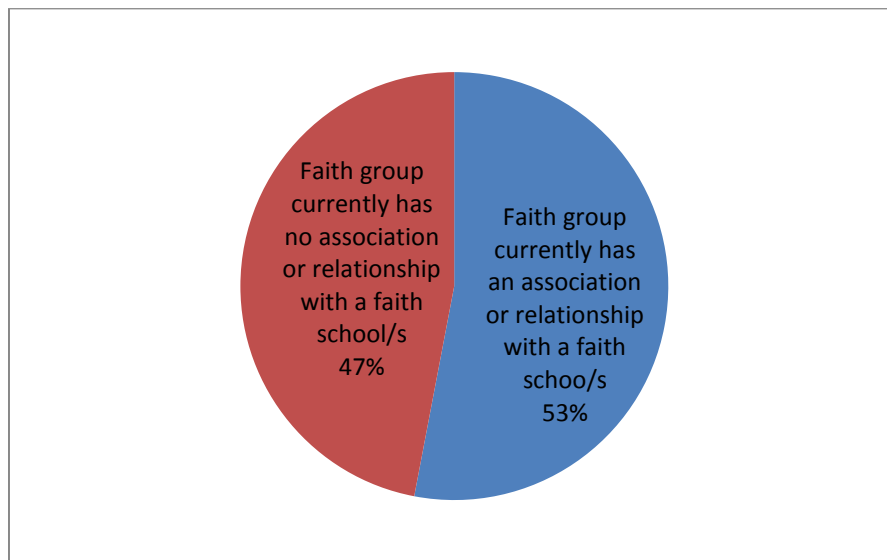
A total of three respondents stated that their faith group was currently developing associations or relationships with local faith schools.

Links with local non-faith schools: 25 (69%) out of 36 respondents stated that their faith group currently had an association or relationship with local non-faith schools, whereas 11 (31%) stated that they had no current associations or relationships with local non-faith schools (see Figure 22 below).

Figure 22: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group currently had/did not have an association/relationships with non-faith school/s (n36).
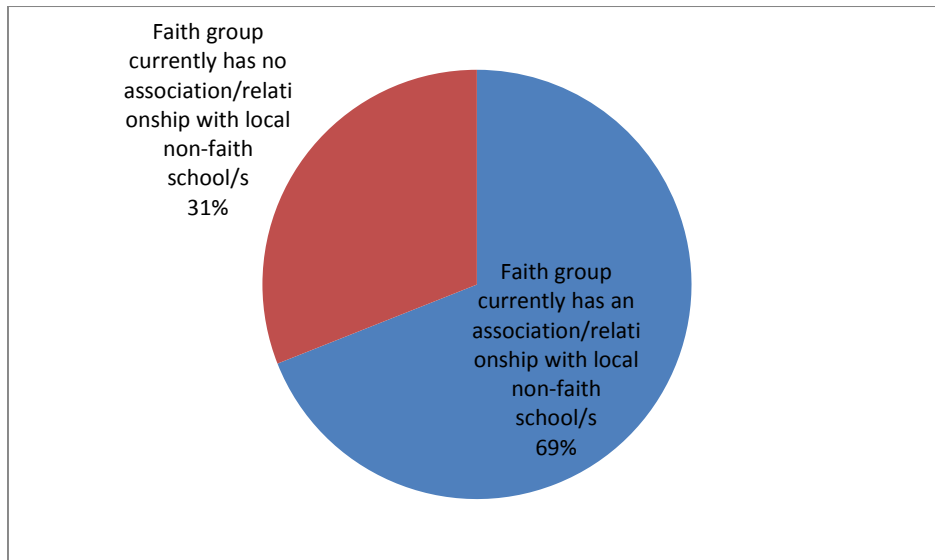
Five respondents stated that their faith group was currently developing associations or relationships with local non-faith schools.

Policy consultations, networking and lobbying: Figure 23 below, shows that of 45 respondents providing details, 55% (25) stated that their faith group did not engage in policy consultations, networking or lobbying in the local area, with 38% (17) stating that their group did so (7%/3 reported they did not know).

Figure 23: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group did/did not engage in policy consultations, networking or lobbying in the local area (n45).
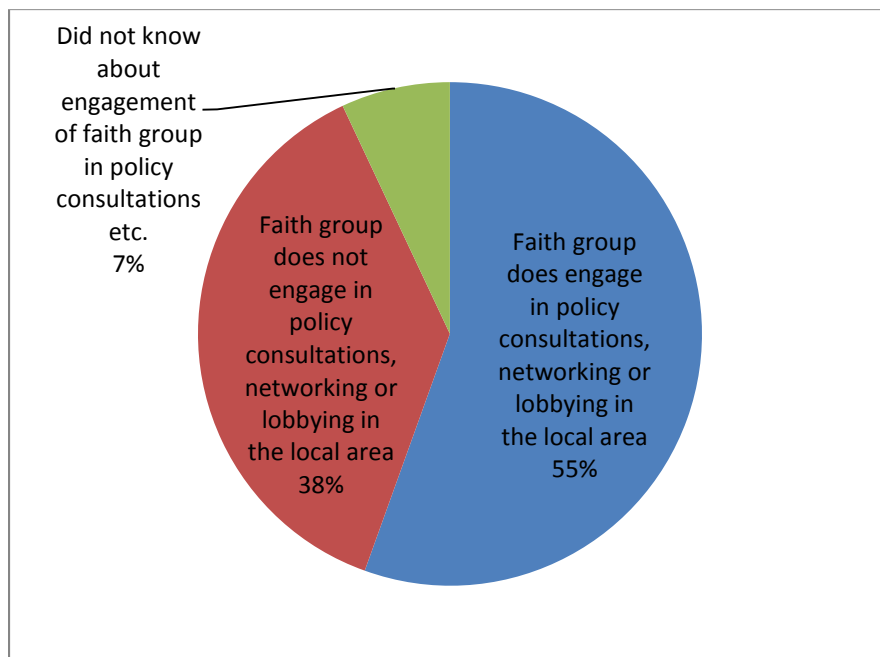
Figure 24 below, shows that approximately 49% (22) respondents stated that their faith group had links with local councillors, 47% (21) stated that their group did not and 4% (2) stated they did not know.

Figure 24: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group had/did not have links with local councillors (n45).
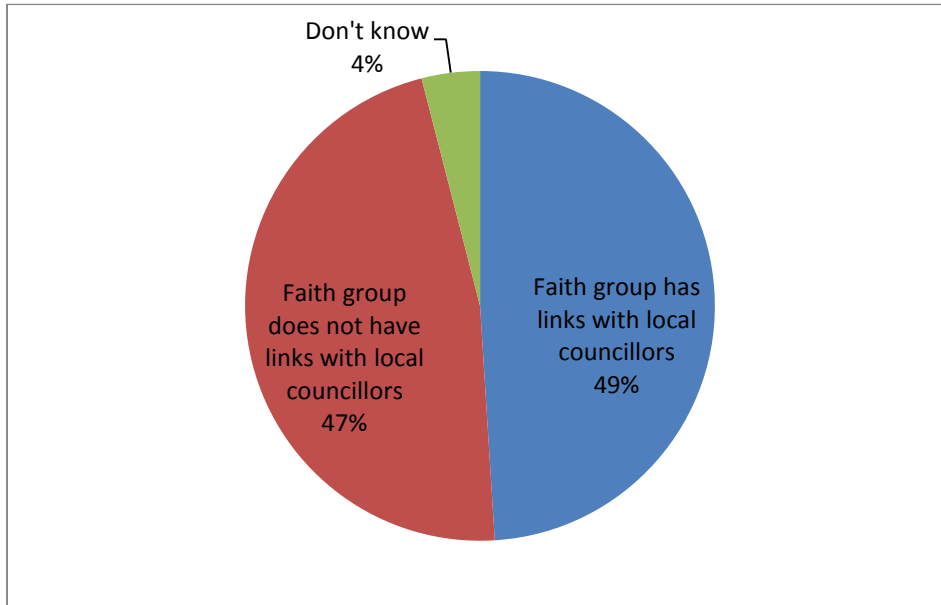
Of 42 respondents providing details, 62% (26) stated that their group would be interested in working more closely with local councillors in future, and 38% (16) reported no interest in doing so (see Figure 25 below).

Figure 25: Percentage of respondents stating that their faith group would be interested in working more closely with councillors in future (n42).
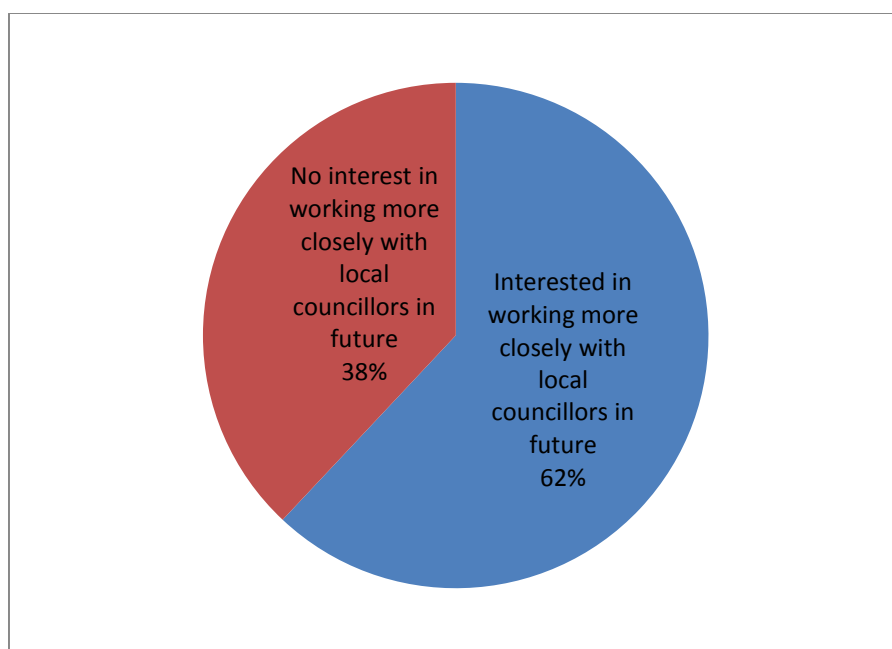
The interviews explored experiences of networking, partnership working and collaboration. As part of meeting individual needs, faith groups have developed relationships with a range of local organisations including the Sutton Housing Partnership, Social Services and the local Citizens Advice Bureau. A key function of the Sutton Community Works initiative is to develop networking and collaboration between faith groups and between faith groups and statutory bodies. Interviewees highlighted examples of members of this initiative meeting with local policymakers to discuss how faith groups might work together more closely with the local council (e.g. in the area of food poverty). Additional examples of networking, partnership working and collaboration identified via interviews include:

➢ Participation in 'Sutton Community Works' which has involved faith groups contributing (via financial and/or volunteer support) to local Street Pastor, Sutton Seniors and food-bank initiatives with the wider aim of supporting faith groups to engage more strategically with the local authority and local communities;

➢ Membership of the Faith and Belief Forum;

➢ Collaboration with the Council to ensure child protection policies and protocols were developed and administered appropriately;

➢ Sitting on the Safer Sutton Partnership;

➢ Networking with the local Police who visit groups to talk about the Safer Neighbourhood initiative and how to keep safe (the Police also refer individuals to faith groups where they think this is helpful);

➢ A faith group working with Bliss volunteers to run a group for disabled children and their parents;

➢ Age UK working with a faith group to enable the latter to deliver activities in care homes.

Interviewees discussed benefits accruing from their collaboration with other organisations and networks. Working collaboratively was felt to enable faith groups to articulate, and act on their concerns (e.g. poverty, social exclusion and wellbeing) with a view to addressing these more effectively than is possible by working in isolation. For example, several interviewees discussed their involvement in the collaborative Sutton Community Works food-bank initiative; an initiative none of these groups felt that they had the resources to operate independently. Another interviewee discussed the financial contribution of their faith group to the Street Pastor initiative designed to support community safety that (as with the food-bank) their faith group could not deliver on its own. An interviewee discussed how partnering with a specialist charity (Bliss) had enabled their faith group to deliver provision for disabled children and their parents more effectively than had been the case previously. The group established provision for disabled children and their parents independently but felt that attendance was disappointingly low. Linking up with Bliss has enabled the group to expand its membership and benefit from advice and promotional activities with potential service-users and volunteers. The following quotes help illustrate these points:

"We started [the group for disabled children and their parents] on our own and it wasn't going particularly well, we weren't getting many people. It's working better with Bliss".

"Our ability to partner with other people, allows us the benefit of being able to punch above our weight. So we are part of the Sutton food bank, which isn't something we can run on our own, but is something we can run in partnership with other churches".

"[name of community project] is looking to answer need within our community that no one church can do by itself, but collectively we can be part of the answer".

Interviews also revealed areas where it was felt inter-faith activity may be possible, such as health-promotion and wellbeing initiatives, food-aid, sport and physical activities.

However, interviews also revealed concerns related to partnership working and collaboration. This included concerns that working with other organisations complicates service development and delivery where organisations are working to different agendas and timescales. Other concerns included dealing with power imbalances within partnerships and perceptions that some faith groups could lose 'their people' to other groups if they worked in partnership with them. Working in partnership was also felt to require substantial communication and attendance at meetings that some interviewees felt was beyond the capacity of their faith group and/or were activities that faith group trustees would not regard as priorities. One faith group is keen to work with other groups and churches in the area to deliver activities, but is concerned about how to manage the various relationships, views and ideas that inevitably accompany multi-organisation collaboration. Fundamentally, some interviewees expressed concerns about the ability of different faith groups to work together given divergent views and history of conflict, reinforced by consequences of various geo-political events in the last fifteen years. Several interviewees also expressed a view that secular organisations may feel uncomfortable working with faith groups because of their religious basis, and that engaging with some organisations might result in the politicisation of their faith group.

A few interviewees felt that previous attempts at collaborative working with statutory organisations had not been a positive experience. This can arise, for example, where faith groups feel there is not enough funding available to deliver expected activities or where there are substantial restructures of a public sector organisation. As a result of their past experiences, some interviewees appeared lukewarm about the potential value of their faith group working with statutory agencies in future. Faith groups clearly do not always find it easy to work in-line with the requirements of statutory organisations with which they collaborate to support those in need.

The case studies below highlight some of the benefits and challenges of collaboration and partnerships between faith groups and voluntary, public and private sector organisations.

Case study 1: Partnership working to help people in crisis

This case study illustrates how faith groups and public, private and third sector partners can work together in a co-ordinated way to effectively respond to individuals and families experiencing a crisis in a way that also helps address isolation and worklessness. The Sutton Foodbank is one of several projects managed by 'Sutton Community Works' - a charity which oversees a number of community-facing projects in Sutton including Sutton Street Pastors and Sutton Seniors. Over 25 churches participate in the Foodbank (by donating food and/or providing volunteers) which operates from three locations within the Borough.

The Foodbank is funded by donations from member-churches and individuals alongside one-off funding from Sutton Community Fund, the Waitrose Community Scheme and St.Helier First. London Borough of Sutton Council recently agreed to make a significant contribution to meet storage costs for 12 months, and Pfizer and Zurich have both made financial contributions towards running costs. A diverse range of over 115 organisations (including Probation services, Age UK, Citizen's Advice the Refugee & Migrant Network Families Matter) are project stakeholders and refer clients to the Foodbank.

The Foodbank provides free emergency food to people experiencing a financial crisis (this might be caused by debt, low pay and/or delays or reductions in benefit payments). The Foodbank continues to provide this service, on a short-term basis, until the appropriate agencies are engaged to provide longer-term assistance to individuals and families. An important part of the ethos of the Foodbank is to signpost clients to other partnering organisations so that underlying causes of debt, money management, unemployment, housing issues etc can start to be addressed. In addition, the Foodbank offers access to a befriending scheme. The project also includes a Foodbank Café supported by funding from the London Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund. The Café is run by those using the services of a partnering agency called Family Mosaic. Some of these individuals have subsequently found employment. Over 70 volunteers from participating faith groups help to run the Foodbank. Between January and September 2013, the Foodbank helped a total of 886 adults and 502 children including couples, lone-parents, single people and families.

The Foodbank illustrates the value of partnership working to co-ordinate a response to an emerging issue that organisations individually would struggle to address. The comments of one interviewee illustrate the value of this collaborative approach to the delivery of the Foodbank initiative: "The food bank … was really a borough-wide response to what we felt would be … growing … food poverty in the coming years". This interviewee also highlighted the importance of developing relationships with partners to enable potential clients to access the Foodbank, stating that: "I don't think you could run the food bank without having the partner agencies on board. Families Matter … they're one of our partners for the Food bank so they will refer any of their troubled families to us". Another interviewee, whose faith group was a Foodbank-partner discussed how their faith group could not operate a Foodbank independently but was able to contribute to a collaboratively delivered Foodbank, commenting that: "We are part of the Sutton Foodbank, which isn't something we can run on our own, but it is something we can run in partnership with other churches … we wouldn't be able to run a food bank on our own because the resource implications of that are beyond us".

Case study 2: Sutton Ramp Events

Sutton Ramp Events (SRE) is a charity with a Christian ethos, based in the London Borough of Sutton. Formally constituted in 2005, SRE grew out of the earlier Soul In The City (SITC) initiative, as part of which churches in the borough came together to host an intensive programme of ramp-based events and activities in Royston Park. In just the first year of its operation, SRE - benefiting from the funding of The Peabody Trust - ran a total of six events, collectively attracting nearly 300 young people. The combination of these and similar events held in the subsequent three years established the groundwork for an expansion of SRE's operation in 2009, when the purchase of two vehicles and a range of mobile ramps enabled important inroads to be made into local schools and colleges - often in areas identified by the local police or borough council as possessing concentrations of young people at risk of exclusion, or, more recently, of obesity and obesity-related health problems. At the heart of SRE's philosophy is a commitment to harnessing the raw and 'edgy' properties of urban sports to engage marginalised young people. Despite its Christian roots, though, SRE is keen to stress that its services are in no way oriented along faith lines; rather, as Judith Smith (SRE's founder and Chair) explains: *"SRE is a local charity serving the whole community regardless of background, faith, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Our activities and volunteer opportunities are open to all young people"*.

While, SRE's financial position requires it to carefully target its interventions, in recent years new collaborative relationships have been established with groups like Sutton Mencap and Sutton Young Carers. Oriented around the distinctive needs of young people with disabilities or care responsibilities, such relationships - in addition to extending the number and range of SRE beneficiaries - offer the potential for transition to a more hybrid, and possibly sustainable, operating model; by, for instance, allowing SRE to tap into a wider range of funding sources. SRE is mindful of the importance of sustaining its support for the many young people central to its original mission; but such moves are necessary in an increasingly prohibitive funding environment. Indeed, for all of its many successes - not to mention the continued support of its pool of more than 80 young people and adult volunteers - SRE continues to experience many of the same difficulties felt by other small charities. In this regard, the combined effects of reduced competitive funding and the Council's recent transition to a commissioning model (one that will see private firms, voluntary and community groups and local organisations afforded the chance to bid more widely for public service contracts) have proven particularly challenging, as Judith Smith explains: *"SRE, like most smaller charities, are facing financial challenging times. Often funders do not look to fund already successful projects, but want to support new ones. As Council, police, schools and voluntary sector groups' budgets get cut, the harder it becomes to secure funding for even the most successful projects"*.

Summary of key findings on networking, partnership and collaboration

➢ The majority of respondents (78%) are aware of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum, although only 26% stated that their group engages with it, compared to 74% who stated their faith group does not engage. The importance of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum was acknowledged by interviewees as valuable for facilitating cohesion and understanding of local policy initiatives, but it was felt more resources are needed to develop its role. This suggests a review of the role and resourcing of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum, in relation to supporting local faith based social action, partnership working (with faith, VCS and statutory partners) as well as more general inter-faith dialogue could be beneficial.

➢ Working collaboratively was felt to enable faith groups to articulate, and act on their concerns (e.g. in respect of poverty, social exclusion and wellbeing) with a view to addressing these more effectively than is possible by working in isolation.

➢ However, interviews also revealed concerns related to partnership working and collaboration, including: complications arising from different agendas, cultures and priorities; power imbalances; concerns that faith groups could lose 'their people' to other groups; and lack of capacity and time for partnership working. Concerns were also raised relating to divergent views, histories of conflict and anxieties associated with the potential for secular organisations to feel uncomfortable working with faith groups because of their religious basis, and that engaging with some organisations might result in the politicisation of their faith group.

➢ Interviewees gave examples of successful collaborative working. However, some felt that previous attempts at collaborative working with statutory organisations had not been a positive experience due to lack of funding and public sector restructures. As a result, some interviewees appeared lukewarm about the potential value of their faith group working with statutory agencies in future.

➢ Many faith groups participating in the audit have links with local faith schools (53% of respondents indicated this), and non-faith schools (69% of respondents indicated this).

➢ Just over half of the respondents stated that their faith group did not engage in policy consultations, networking or lobbying in the local area, with 38% stating that their group did so.

➢ A number of faith groups have links with local councillors (with approximately 49% indicating this). There is, however, significant interest in developing links further, as suggested by the finding that 62% of respondents stated that their group would be interested in working more closely with local councillors. Around 47% stated that their faith group did not currently have links with their local councillor. As already reported, one of the most common information and training needs expressed by respondents relates to developing stronger links with local councillors (57% of respondents).

5.10 Future direction and activities

As can be seen from tables 5 and 6 below, respondents most commonly expressed a desire to work collaboratively in the future with other local faith and voluntary groups (and to a lesser extent statutory partners) than businesses across many of the service/user groups and activities.

Table 5: The number of respondents stating that their faith group is interested in working collaboratively with other partners to deliver activities and community projects relating to specific groups

Specified groups	Working with other local faith groups	Working with voluntary sector groups	Working with private businesses	Working with public sector organisations
Armed Forces or Veterans	6	5	1	2
Asylum seekers, migrants or refugees	9	6	4	5
Children	13	12	5	8
Economically disadvantaged/low income households	13	11	4	9
Elderly people (those aged 60+)	14	13	2	9
Offenders/ex-offenders	8	8	3	6
Gypsy and traveller community	3	2	1	2
Homeless people	10	8	4	8
Lone parents	11	8	2	6
People with addictions to alcohol or drugs	9	10	4	7
People with HIV/Aids	7	6	2	4
People with mental health issues	7	7	3	7
People with physical or learning disabilities	7	8	4	8
Students	10	7	2	5
Those identifying as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or trans-gendered	6	5	1	4
Unemployed people	10	6	2	5
Young people (those under 25)	13	11	3	9
Other	2	2	2	2

Table 6: The number of respondents stating that their faith group is interested in working collaboratively with other partners to deliver specific activities.

Specified activities	Working with other local faith groups	Working with voluntary sector groups	Working with private businesses	Working with public sector organisations
Advocacy	7	6	3	3
Arts or musical activities	7	9	3	3
Befriending/Visiting schemes	10	9	4	6
Café	4	5	2	3
Childcare	2	4	3	3
Clubs, Drop In's or Groups for different groups of people	10	10	3	7
Counselling	8	4	4	5
Creche/playgroups	2	3	5	4
Credit Union	3	5	2	2
Education or training	7	6	5	7
Financial advice (including advice about debt management and claiming benefits)	9	7	2	2
Food-bank	10	7	2	5
Health information or advice	5	6	3	5
Legal advice or services	2	2	1	3
Meals	5	4	2	2
Recreational, sport or fitness activities	6	4	3	5
Religious or cultural activities	17	5	2	6
Social care	5	3	2	4
Street Pastors	9	1	0	3
Transport	3	2	1	2
Volunteer or work placements	6	5	4	6
Other	2	2	2	2

Similarly, respondents most commonly expressed a desire to work collaboratively in the future with other local faith and voluntary groups across the initiatives on 'aging well', 'living well', 'independent living', 'working with young people' and 'safer communities'. However, between nine and 14 respondents reported interest in working in the future with public sector organisations in connection with these initiatives (see table 7)

Table 7: The number of respondents stating that their faith group would be interested in working collaboratively to deliver provision linked to specific initiatives.

Initiative	Working with other local faith groups	Working with voluntary sector groups	Working with private businesses	Working with public sector organisations
Aging Well (activities for elderly people and to tackle social isolation)	16	16	4	14
Living Well (activities that encourage healthy active living)	14	15	5	10
Independent Living (activities for those who may be vulnerable or less able to live independently)	11	12	5	9
Working with Young People (activities to support young people)	16	14	7	12
Safe Communities (activities to build closer, stronger, safer communities)	14	13	6	12

Interviews also explored issues relating to the future direction and priorities of faith groups. Key themes emerging from the interviews were:

Financial security: A majority of interviewees felt that their faith group was currently financially secure and would remain so for the foreseeable future. These groups felt that their income (from congregation donations, service-charges and funding from associated church organisations) would enable them to continue to deliver most, if not all, of their current activities. Some interviewees expressed a desire to explore corporate funding opportunities. However, the financial position of a minority of organisations was more precarious, with one facing possible closure during 2014 unless further funding was obtained. Linked to the issue of financial security, several interviewees indicated an interest in bidding for commissioned services, but were unsure whether they boasted the sufficient size and experience to do so and felt training in grant application and bid writing would be helpful. Overall, it is clear from the interviews that the financial resources of faith groups are finite and that they are mindful of their financial position, as the following interviewee quotes suggest:

> *"Obviously there is a question of finance all the time, otherwise you might not be able to keep all your activities … hiring a bus each week - two coaches each week, it's not cheap".*

> *"I think our biggest challenge is lack of time in terms of the demand greatly strips the capabilities of the workers, we could probably employ at least another couple of workers in each sector, but we just haven't got the finances to do it".*

> *"Our financial situation is we've got enough to keep running the charity to the end of March (five months from point of interview) and then that's it".*

Whole Sutton and area-focused activities: Building on activities currently undertaken as part of the Sutton Community Works initiative, several interviewees discussed their enthusiasm for on-going participation in the food-bank and Street Pastors initiatives. Plans were suggested for developing (perhaps collaboratively to better respond to declining financial resources) a more co-ordinated and structured set of activities focused on meeting the various needs of those living in the Borough, and particularly of those living in its more deprived areas (e.g. St. Helier and Shanklin). This could include activities for elderly people

and support for those with mental health issues and substance misuse problems. The following comments from interviewees illustrate these points:

"I think if there was a concerted effort to begin to have a more structured approach to meeting some of the needs…on the Shanklin estate, we would be part of that".

"If we were able to work in partnership with other people in addressing some of the acute needs that are encountered on the Shanklin village, then that is something we're very excited about".

Priority groups: Interviewees suggested that future activities would be prioritised among those groups for whom they currently delivered activities (e.g. children and young people, parents and older people). However, some interviewees discussed an interest in extending their faith group's activities to include offenders/young offenders and those without secure accommodation.

Delivering commissioned services: Most interviewees had not seriously considered the role of their faith group in the delivery of commissioned services. Responses indicate that delivering commissioned services is something that faith groups would consider in principal, but that commissioned services would need to be similar to those already delivered if faith groups were to be in a position to consider tendering for commissioned work (it is likely at least some groups would require support to develop and cost proposals).

Interviewees suggested the following as priority areas for service development:

➢ Debt advice: Several interviewees felt that debt, linked to recent and on-going welfare benefit changes, is an emerging issue that will become more salient in the Borough which faith groups could and should respond to. As one interviewee commented:

"I think with the withdrawal of certain benefits and the capping of others … that debt is becoming an increasing challenge for people. That is borne out of the fact that there are…, outside of CAB [the Citizens Advice Bureau], two debt counselling provisions, where there were none when I joined four years ago … We have referred people to the food bank in the knowledge that they will receive immediate help … but also [in the knowledge] there will more long-term help with the offer of debt counselling".

➢ School Pastors: Several interviewees discussed their keenness for their faith group to become involved in the 'School Pastor' initiative currently being developed, which is designed to provide care and support to a 'school community'. Pastors promote safety and aim to reduce anti-social behaviour by listening, caring and helping young people to become good citizens.

➢ Advertising and promotion: The value of wider promotion of faith group activities was mentioned by several interviewees, who felt this was important to maximise engagement with (and so the sustainability of) their activities – and to overcome a situation where some potential service users do not think that provision designed to support them is 'for them'.

Summary of key findings on future direction and activities

➢ Respondents most commonly expressed a desire to work collaboratively in the future with other local faith and voluntary groups (and to a lesser extent statutory partners) than businesses across many of the service/user groups, activities and Council initiatives e.g. 'aging well', 'living well', 'independent living', 'working with young people' and 'safer communities'.

➢ There is interest among some faith groups in working more collaboratively with the Council. Between 9 and 14 respondents reported interest in working in the future with public sector organisations in connection with each of the Council initiatives.

➢ A majority of interviewees felt that their faith group was currently financially secure and would remain so for the foreseeable future. However, the financial position of a minority of organisations was more precarious, with one facing possible closure during 2014 unless further funding was obtained.

➢ Interviewees suggested that future activities would be prioritised among those groups for whom they currently delivered activities (e.g. children and young people, parents and older people). Several interviewees indicated an interest in bidding for commissioned services, but were unsure if they were sufficiently experienced and sized to do so. They felt training in grant application and bid writing would be helpful. Plans were also suggested for developing, perhaps collaboratively, a more co-ordinated and structured set of activities focused on meeting the needs of those living in the Borough, and of those in more deprived areas (e.g. St. Helier and Shanklin). This could include activities for elderly people and support for those with mental health issues and substance misuse problems.

➢ Priority areas mentioned for development among the faith groups interviewed include debt advice, the School Pastor' initiative and advertising and promotion of activities.

6. Conclusions

This audit demonstrates that faith groups in the Borough contribute to a variety of community projects and initiatives (otherwise referred to as faith based social action), as well as more informal ad-hoc support to individuals.

In terms of reach, a significant proportion of respondents 72% (28) reported that 50 or more people use or participate in non-worshiping activities or community projects each week, with 28% (11) stating 49 or fewer participants/users. Among the respondents, activities and community projects are most commonly provided to children, the elderly and young people, and include religious or cultural activities, clubs/drop in's or groups for different people and crèche/play groups. This suggests that there are overlaps in the interests and activities of several faith groups and local authority initiatives and priorities focused particularly on young people and aging well. This is further implied by the finding that 70% (26 out of 37) and 55% (22 out of 40) of survey respondents report that their faith group is involved in the delivery of activities linked to the young people and aging well initiatives respectively.

Overlaps are also evident in relation to Council initiatives on 'safer communities' and 'living well', with 48% (14 out of 29) and 38% (11 out of 29) of survey respondents respectively, reporting that their faith group is involved in the delivery of activities in these areas. In addition to direct provision, many faith groups also undertake referral and signposting activities, most commonly in relation to financial advice, counselling, food banks and advocacy.

Overlaps in the interests and priorities of different organisations offer the potential for mutually beneficial working relationships, collaboration and support to be developed and maintained with a view to addressing common goals. Working collaboratively is felt to enable faith groups to articulate, and act on their concerns (e.g. in respect of poverty, social exclusion and wellbeing) more effectively than is possible by working in isolation.

Among faith groups responding to the survey, interest in future collaboration is more commonly expressed in relation to other local faith and voluntary sector groups than statutory partners and businesses across many activities and service/user groups. Previous research suggests that there is a tendency for links to wider voluntary organisations to be formed by larger and more established faith groups, with smaller faith groups tending to rely on their own networks (Boeck et al 2009). There is a suggestion in this, and other literature, that more could be done to encourage better links between faith and more secular voluntary sector groups (see Boeck et al 2009, p48; NCVO 2007, p41; Lukka et al 2003, p71).

Several respondents reported working with statutory partners, and expressed an interest in developing this in the future. For example, between 9 and 14 respondents expressed an interest in working with public sector organisations in the future in relation to the aging well, living well, independent living, young people and safe communities initiatives. Interest is also evident in respect to working more closely with local councillors, with 62% (26) of faith group respondents indicating an interest in doing this in the future. Some interviewees

also expressed a wish to work with statutory agencies to help identify potential venues for delivering activities and community projects.

These findings suggest there is scope, and further interest in greater collaboration and supportive relationships in reaching common goals, particularly among faith groups, between faith groups and the voluntary sector, and between faith groups and statutory partners. The nature of this, and approach to further developing and supporting it, will need to be context specific. Different approaches may be needed, for example, for different groups and/or activities, and greater collaboration may not be appropriate or desired in some cases.

The audit suggests action may also be needed to address reported barriers, challenges, anxieties and training needs associated with effective partnership and support for social action. Barriers and challenges include: lack of faith group capacity; difficulties identifying and/or securing funding; lack of knowledge among faith groups about the role and priorities of the Council; and concerns that secular organisations may feel uncomfortable working with faith groups because of their religious basis. The most commonly reported information and training needs relate to developing stronger links with local councillors, caring for vulnerable adults and identifying and/or applying for funding. Faith groups also reported training and information needs in the areas of: health and safety, the Council's agendas, policies and strategies, how to lobby/influence policymakers and about the roles and responsibilities of the local authority.

The Local Government Association report 'Faith and Belief in Partnership: Effective Collaboration with Local Government (see Chapman, 2012) presents good practice and strategies adopted by faith groups and statutory partners for developing both effective partnership and support for faith based social action. It may be useful to review this, and other guidance (see the bibliography), with stakeholders in the Borough with a view to further developing strategies and actions in the area. A number of specific recommendations for consideration are presented in the next section.

7.   Suggested Recommendations

Statutory partners

➢ **Strategies for engagement, collaboration and support**: Review and/or develop strategies for engagement and support of faith groups alongside, or as part of, the wider VCS and other stakeholders. In light of the findings, the local authority and faith groups might want to consider options for greater partnership working and/or support for social action in relation to the following user-groups and activities (given that these are where interests and action commonly overlap) - user-groups: children, the elderly and young people; activities: cultural activities, clubs, drop in's or groups for different people and crèche/play groups. Such activities can be linked to Council initiatives on working with young people and aging well, although there is also scope for partnership and social action support and development relating to initiatives on safer communities and living well. Statutory partners could consider working with faith groups in relation to their interest in developing a more co-ordinated and structured set of activities focused on meeting the needs of those living in the Borough as a whole, and of those in more deprived areas of the Borough (e.g. St. Helier and Shanklin). They may also consider working with faith groups to further their priorities for future development, for example, in relation to debt advice, the School Pastor' initiative and advertising and promotion of their activities. The latter could be supported, in part, through the publication of a local directory of faith group organisations and activities, as well as wider promotional activities.

➢ **Commissioning**: as part of the above review, the Council could consider involving faith groups more in the commissioning process, e.g. through considering them for funding and also consulting them when drawing up commissioning strategies.

➢ **Facilitating engagement, collaboration and social action**: As part of the above review, examine what more can be done to reduce barriers to engagement, collaboration and social action. This could involve a review of the provision of financial and non-financial support e.g. use of buildings and office space, signposting, information exchange and supporting faith groups to strengthen funding applications. Barriers to social action provision commonly experienced include: lack of expertise, volunteers, staff and time; difficulties identifying and/or securing funding, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of information about local council agendas, policies or strategies, and difficulties arising from a lack of staff or volunteers with sufficient skills. Action could be taken to increase awareness of existing support and guidance available via local and national organisations, such as the Local Government Association, the Faith Based Regeneration Network, the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, the East of England Faiths Council, the Inter Faith Network for the UK, and the Church Urban Fund. It may also be useful to review the Local Government Association report (Faith and Belief in Partnership: Effective Collaboration with Local Government - Chapman, 2012) and other guidance (see the bibliography) with a view to further developing strategies and actions.

➢ **Links between faith groups and local councillors**: Review scope for improvement in the extent and ways in which councillors engage with faith groups alongside other stake-

holders and address any barriers. The findings suggest significant interest among faith groups in developing links with local councillors further. Activities, information and training could help facilitate this, especially given that one of the most common information and training needs expressed by participating faith groups relates to this.

> **Sutton Faith and Belief Forum**: Review the role and resourcing of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum in relation to supporting local faith based social action, partnership working (with faith, VCS and statutory partners) as well as more general inter-faith dialogue.

> **Training and information provision**: Undertake a review of the nature and availability of training and information provision to faith groups by various partners (e.g. statutory partners, VCS and faith groups). This can help identify current provision (which could be communicated to faith groups in a guide to resources). It could also help identify gaps and inform a more strategic (and perhaps collaborative) action plan on training and information provision. The audit findings suggest priority areas for a review (where support is more frequently needed) include information and training provision on: developing stronger links with local councillors; caring for vulnerable adults; how to identify and/or apply for funding; health and safety; as well as information about how to lobby/influence policymakers and about the Council's role/responsibilities, policies and strategies.

> **Networking and collaboration**: Develop opportunities and strategies whereby the Council, faith groups, VCS and businesses meet each other with a view to building understanding, trust, relationships, sharing information and developing collaborative working. This could involve: organising joint thematic events on topics of common interest e.g. through breakfast seminars and/or conferences; meeting faith groups on their own 'turf', attending faith and community events and identifying influential people with a view to helping build relationships. It could also be useful to develop and/or review strategies for helping faith groups to collaborate with each other and the wider VCS, given that respondents most commonly expressed a desire to work with these groups.

> **Developing relationships:** When seeking to make new contacts with faith groups consider first approaching 'gate-keepers', more outward looking faith groups and/or seek the help of a 'broker', such as a councillor, officer or community leader from the same faith background, who can help facilitate an introduction, negotiations and relationship building.

> **Awareness**: Take steps to ensure faith groups are aware of available engagement opportunities, understand the role and priorities of the Council, and can see the benefit of their involvement.

> **Skills and knowledge**: Ensure staff involved in engagement activities have or develop relevant skills and knowledge e.g. active listening, being able to identify 'win-win' outcomes, and being open, respectful and assertive.

> **Dedicated councillor or officer**: If not already in place, consider having a dedicated councillor or officer with a remit, time, capacity and resources for building relations with faith and voluntary sector groups.

➢ **Quality assurance and kite-mark tools**: Where appropriate, consider recommending faith groups to use a quality assurance and kite-mark tool designed to assist VCS organisations and faith groups to communicate their work to potential funders and partners.

➢ **Time**: Factor in time to build trusting relationships, develop effective and sustainable community projects, and for faith groups to learn funding jargon, processes and adapt their working practices.

➢ **Faith and belief literacy**: Where appropriate, ensure provision of faith and belief literacy training among councillors and officers.

Faith groups

➢ **Strategies for engagement, collaboration and support**: Where appropriate, consider developing informed and strategic approaches to working with other faith groups, the wider VCS and the public sector with a view to developing collaboration and securing additional resources, information and support. In light of the findings, the local authority and faith groups might want to consider options for greater partnership working and/or support for social action in relation to the following user-groups and activities (given that these are where interests and action commonly overlap) - user-groups: children, the elderly and young people; activities: cultural activities, clubs, drop in's or groups for different people and crèche/play groups. Such activities can be linked to Council initiatives on working with young people and aging well, although there is also scope for greater partnership and social action support and development relating to initiatives on safer communities and living well.

➢ **Co-ordinated planning and promotion**: Consider working with other faith groups and partners in relation to developing a more co-ordinated and structured set of activities focused on meeting the needs of those living in the Borough as a whole, and of those in more deprived areas of the Borough. Explore opportunities for advertising and promotion of faith group activities e.g. through participating in the publication of a local directory of faith group organisations and activities, as well as any wider promotion activities (see local authority recommendations).

➢ **Commissioning**: enhance awareness of, and consider opportunities associated with the Council's commissioning process (e.g. in relation to funding and also informing the Council of any community needs in the locality which could help inform their commissioning strategy).

➢ **Facilitating engagement, collaboration and social action**: Examine what more can be done to reduce barriers to engagement, collaboration and social action, and where appropriate, consider working with others (e.g. faith groups, wider VCS and statutory partners) to help address these. This could involve increasing awareness of existing support and guidance available via local and national organisations, such as the Local Government Association, the Faith Based Regeneration Network, the National Council of Volun-

tary Organisations, the East of England Faiths Council, the Inter Faith Network for the UK, and the Church Urban Fund.

➢ **Links between faith groups and local councillors**: Review scope for improvement in the extent and ways in which faith groups and councillors engage with each other and address any barriers.

➢ **Sutton Faith and Belief Forum**: Review the role and resourcing of the Sutton Faith and Belief Forum, in relation to supporting local faith based social action, partnership working (with faith, VCS and statutory partners) as well as more general inter-faith dialogue.

➢ **Training and information provision**: Review and seek to address training and/or support needs, including those around social action, collaboration and partnership working (see also local authority recommendation).

➢ **Networking and collaboration**: Consider working with others to develop opportunities and strategies whereby the Council, faith groups, VCS and businesses meet each other with a view to building understanding, trust, relationships, sharing information and developing collaborative working (see also local authority recommendations).

➢ **Communicating with others:** Where appropriate, ensure clarity and agreement over what counts as proselytising and delivering on equalities, and seek to address any misplaced fears or anxieties around these e.g. through transparency, trust building, communication, 'myth busting' and demonstrating outcomes etc. Be clear about what compromises are prepared to be taken to engage with others. If appropriate, consider using a quality assurance and kite-mark tool designed to assist VCS organisations and faith groups to communicate activity to potential funders and partners.

VCS membership organisations

➢ **Strategic review**: Review strategic approaches to developing collaborative work and support with faith and inter-faith organisations (see recommendations above).

➢ **Collaboration and support**: Create opportunities for face-to-face dialogue and engagement with faith groups and seek to determine if there are any distinctive or specialised support needs. Consider raising awareness of any existing support available. Where appropriate, take support out to faith groups, particularly where this is likely to be more effective than inviting faith groups to attend events and training on site.

Bibliography

Baker, C. and Skinner, H. (2005) Telling the Stories: How Churches are Contributing to Social Capital, Manchester: William Temple Foundation.

Berkeley, N. et al (2006), Faithful Representation: Faith Representatives on Local Public Partnerships: Summary, Key Findings and Recommendations, London: Church Urban Fund.

Boeck et al (2009) 'Volunteering and Faith Communities in England', London: Volunteering England.

Chapman, R. (2012) Faith and belief in partnership. Effective collaboration with local government, the Local Government Association and Northumbria University.

Chapman, R. and Lowndes, V. (2008) 'Faith in Governance? The Potential and Pitfalls of Involving Faith Groups in Urban Governance' in Planning, Practice & Research, Vol. 23, NO 1, pp. 57-75.

Chapman, R. (2009), 'Faith and the voluntary sector in urban governance: distinctive yet similar?' in A. Dinham, et al. (eds), Faith in the Public Realm: Controversies, Policies and Practices, Bristol: Policy Press pp. 203–222.

Chapman, R. and Lowndes, V. (2009) Accountable, Authorized or Authentic? What do Faith Representatives' Offer Urban Governance? Public Money and Management, 29, 6, pp.371-378.

Cradock et al (2005) Building the Capacity of London's Faith Groups, London: Faithworks.

Craig, G et al (2012) Race, Crime and Justice in the North East Region, University of Durham, Northumbria University and Teesside University.

DCLG (2008) Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society, London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

DCLG (2012) Creating the Conditions for Integration, London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Dinham, A; Furbey, R; Lowndes, V (eds) (2009) Faith in the Public Realm. Controversies, policies and practices. The Policy Press, Bristol.

Dinham, A. et al (2011) More than Measurement: Assessing Quality through Reflection in Faith-based Social Action, London: Faiths & Civil Society Unit, Goldsmiths University of London.

Escott, P. and Logan, P. (2006) Faith in LSPs? The Experience of Faith Community Representatives on Local Strategic Partnerships, London: The Churches Regional Network.

Farnell, R et al (2003), 'Faith' in Urban Regeneration: Engaging Faith Communities in Urban Regeneration, Bristol: The Policy Press.

Farnell, R et al (2006) 'Faith' in Rural Communities: Contributions of Social Capital to Community Vibrancy, Warwickshire: ACORA Publishing.

Fentener, R. et al (2008) Faith Groups and Government, London: Community Development Foundation.

Furbey, R. & Macey, M. (2005) Religion and urban regeneration: a place for faith in Policy & Politics, Vol. 33, NO 1, 95-116.

Furbey, R. et al (2006) Faith as Social Capital: Connecting or Dividing?, Bristol: Policy Press and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Grieve, J. et al (2007) Faith in the Community: The Contribution of Faith-Based Organisations to Rural Voluntary Action, London: NCVO.

HM Government (2010) Building a Stronger Civil Society. A strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises. Department for Communities & Local Government.

Leby, A. (2007) Faith Representation on Public Bodies: A Feasibility Study, The Churches Commission.

LGA (2008) Local Authority Engagement with Faith Groups and Inter Faith Organisations: Survey of England and Wales, London: Local Government Association.

Lowndes, V. and Chapman, R. (2005) Faith, Hope and Clarity: Developing a Model of Faith Group Involvement in Civil Renewal: Main Report, Leicester: De Montfort University, [Available at: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/faculties/business_and_law/business/research/lgru/].

Lowndes, V. and Chapman, R. (2007) 'Faith, Hope and Clarity: Faith Groups and Civil Renewal', in T. Brannan, P. John and G. Stoker (eds) Re-Energizing Citizenship: Strategies for Civil Renewal, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 163-84.

Lukka, P. et al (2003) Faith and Voluntary Action: Community, Values and Resources, London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

NCVO (2007) Faith and Voluntary Action: An Overview of Current Evidence and Debates, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

NWRDA (2003), Faith in England's Northwest: The Contribution made by Faith Communities to Civil Society in the Region, Warrington: Northwest Development Agency.

Perfect, D. (2011) Religion or Belief, Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.