

## NASACRE AGM Chairman's report 2017

This has been something of a surprising 12 months! At this point in time I was expecting to be acceding to David's throne, but somewhat like the Duke of Edinburgh, he opted to take a back seat rather sooner than might have been expected! Shortly after the last AGM David Hampshire, our Chair was delighted to take up a position with the Inter Faith Network and had to resign as the Chair of NASACRE. This meant that I, having served as Vice-Chair since May 2015, took over the chairmanship with immediate effect. I can say that it is my intention to remain as Chair for a further two years and pass on the NASACRE baton in a timely manner to my successor.

Sharon Artley has been a wonderful servant to the NASACRE Executive for many years, ostensibly as Membership Secretary, but in reality doing far more than that – including running our invoicing, website and NASACRE briefing, to name just three and I want to publicly thank her for all that she has done for many years. Although she is stepping back we are reassured that she will answer our phone calls and be ready to give advice when we need it. As delegates will be aware, Denise Chaplin, who cannot be here today, has taken over as Editor of SACRE Briefing and we have also employed Marie Cooper as an Administrator to try to cover some of the huge workload which Sharon had. I must also thank the whole of the Executive who give their time so generously to ensure that we continue to help RE thrive up and down the country.

I can report that following last year's AGM we held an electronic vote on adopting a new constitution and all 42 SACREs who responded were in favour, so this was carried as a unanimous vote.

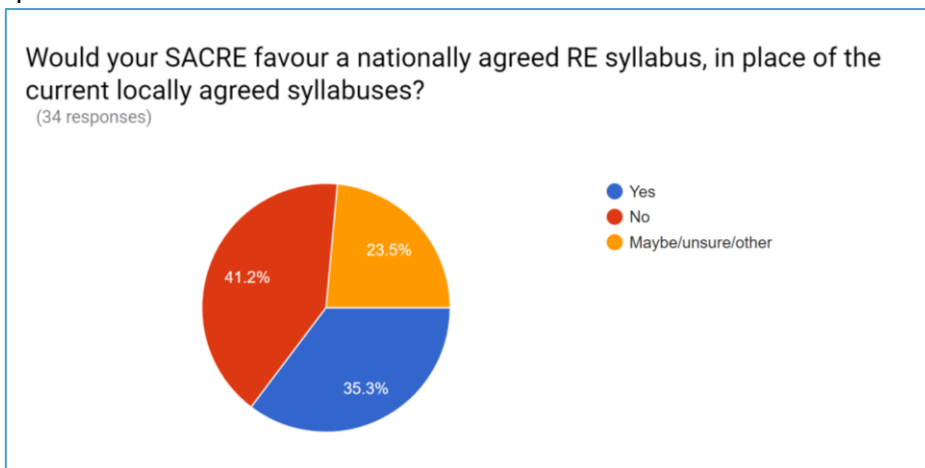
Much of the RE world has been somewhat preoccupied with the REC's Commission on RE. We continue to urge SACREs and individuals to respond to the call for evidence. We have welcomed Rudi Lockhart, CEO of the REC to one of our Executive meetings and hope to continue to work closely with the REC to represent your interests. We as a NASACRE Executive will be looking to make a formal response on your behalf later in the year. We have also maintained professional relationships with the APPG for RE, making contributions to their meetings as has been outlined in SACRE Briefings. We continue to work closely with AREIAC and hope to again collaborate next year on another conference following the highly regarded *Religions are not Monoliths* earlier this year.

We have had further meetings with DfE Officials, including a meeting with the Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division of the DfE. They are working on protocols for faith visitors to schools, so if any SACREs have produced guidance on either visits to places of worship or visitors from faiths into schools, please send them into me. They would like to ensure any guidance they issue is in line with what SACREs advise. We hope to continue to meet regularly with DfE to ensure that SACREs are at the centre of their thinking on RE. It is understood that Justine Greening is very interested in making evidence-based decisions.

Thank you to member SACREs who have sent in a response to the Big NASACRE Survey over the last couple of months. Can I apologise for both the limitations and the length of the survey, but we felt that at this time it is more important than ever that we are able to represent you from a position of knowledge. It is still very early to discuss the findings, which in time will help us to represent the views of SACREs at a national level, engaging with policymakers and politicians, the DfE, Ofsted and others including the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

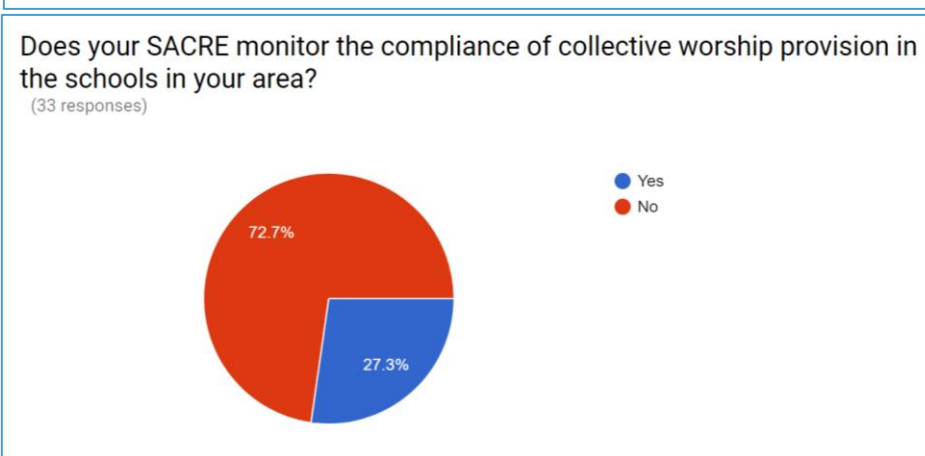
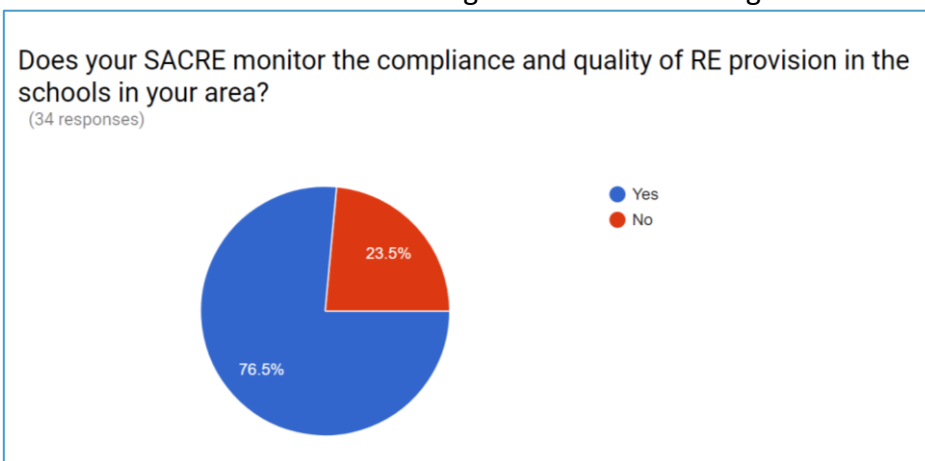
I can however give you some initial headlines from the Big NASACRE Survey (which have not been scrutinised for accuracy). It is hoped that this and the remaining data can be analysed further and published more properly before the end of the year.

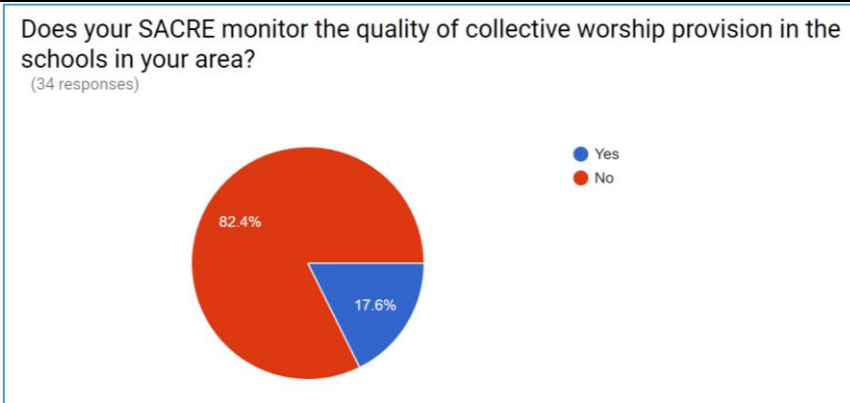
There were 34 responses to most questions. Almost 60% have a unique Locally Agreed Syllabus, 30% share and less than 10% use on 'off the shelf' syllabus. There were many strengths to the LAS system and a variety of weaknesses although at least one SACRE suggested there was no weakness to the current system. When asked about a 'National Curriculum' for RE there was an interesting response:



Of those who favoured a National Syllabus (and some made reference to Frameworks and guidance) 100% felt this Agreed National Syllabus should be mandatory in all schools, including academies and free schools, schools with a religious character and independent schools and almost all thought it must include a 'significant local component'.

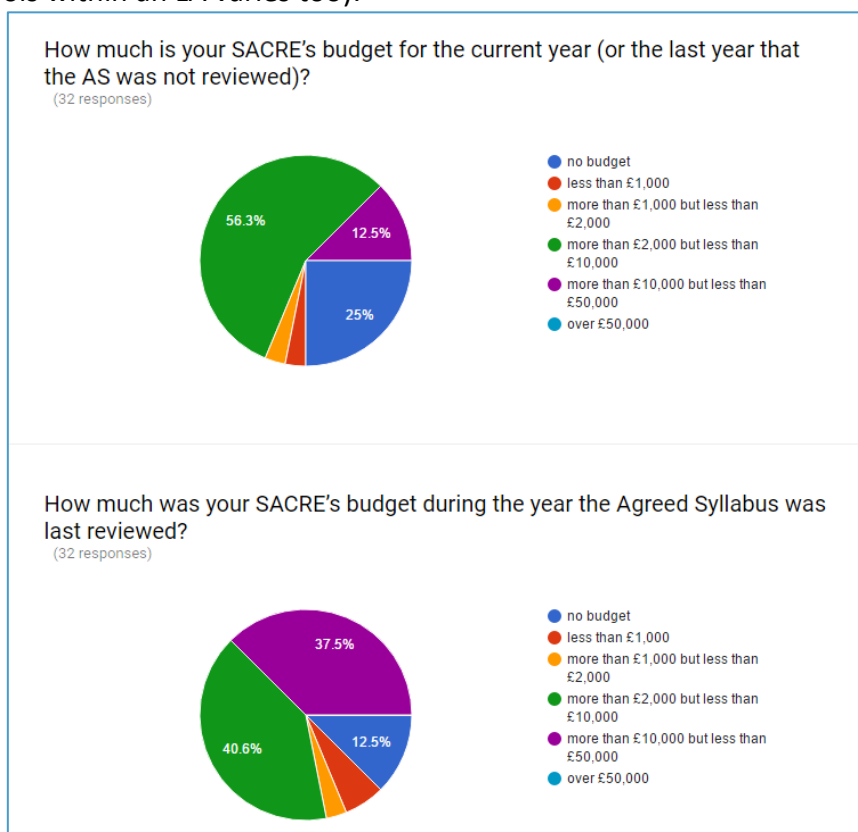
There was a distinct variance between monitoring of RE and monitoring of Collective Worship:





This demands further analysis, but at first glance many SACREs appear to have a desire to do more, but are constrained by capacity. Much of the monitoring that goes on is school-based self-evaluation and response to surveys.

Funding was an issue for many SACREs with budgets varying tremendously (although of course the number of schools within an LA varies too):



Although over 80% of SACREs have access to specialist RE advisers, this seems to vary between as little as two days per year and as many as 65, with no SACRE now reporting a full time RE adviser.

I have been delighted to hear of the various activities that SACREs are engaged in, from those SACREs which have held teacher conferences, launched new syllabi or guidance, to those who held pupil events and many other things. Some of you submitted an entry to ACCORD for their inclusivity Awards, so congratulations to Brent and the other commended SACREs, and to all those who ACCORD did not feel met their criteria. It has also been challenging for the Westhill Awards Panel to try to judge between a number of high quality entrants. These examples of good practice – and please continue to let NASACRE know what you are doing, even if you don't consider it to be groundbreaking, it might inspire another SACRE – are evidence that the SACRE system is not as defunct as some would have us believe. There are many challenges, and who knows what the outcome of the General Election will bring to Local Authorities or the DfE, but we can be sure that 152 SACREs up and down the country will continue to do their best to ensure that schools are supported to give pupils the best experience of RE that they can, and a form of RE that is the envy of the rest of Europe, if not the world.

Paul Smalley, Chair of NASACRE, May 2017