

STILL STANDING

A report on future directions for SACREs



A report on the joint REC/NASACRE LAN Pilot project 2020-21

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Appendix 6 Richmond SACRE: Expanding and organising SACRE membership

Richmond Participatory Action research

BACKGROUND

The Final Report of the Commission on Religious Education, *Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward. A National Plan for RE*, was published in September 2018. It set out a National Plan for RE comprising of eleven recommendations, and called on the Government to consider and adopt it.

Recommendation 8 in the Report made a series of proposals regarding the establishment of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and suggesting that the legislation in relation to these should be amended and they should be renamed as Local Advisory Networks for Religion and Worldviews (LANs).

d. The Local Advisory Network for Religion and Worldviews should be made up of members from five groups: i. teachers of Religion and Worldviews from all phases including Higher Education ii. school leaders and governors iii. ITE and/or CPD providers iv. school providers including the LA, MATs, dioceses etc v. religion, belief and other groups that support RE in schools or wish to do so (this might include local museums and galleries as well as religion and belief groups).

This proposal emerged from the following findings outlined in the Report:

102. Whilst there are SACREs that are highly effective, some SACREs find it extremely difficult to recruit and retain members and the unwieldy committee structure means that some SACREs are unable to meet due to lacking representation or attendance from members of one or more committees.

105. The composition of SACREs has not kept pace with changes in the education system. There are many more stakeholders involved in supporting high quality RE than are represented on SACREs, including higher education institutions and school providers. We have also found in the written and oral evidence that SACREs can sometimes become battlegrounds for representation rather than focused on improving support for schools. We therefore recommend a number of changes to the composition of SACREs.

In relation to Point 102, it might be argued that many of the concerns expressed would apply equally to LANs and adversely affect their ability to carry out the role defined for them in the Report.

In relation to Point 105, anecdotal evidence through NASACRE, supported by information included in Annual SACRE Reports, indicates that some SACREs engage creatively with the current legislation around membership and already include a wider range of stakeholders.

Specifying the problem

As part of this project, The LB of Richmond upon Thames SACRE was invited to consider and respond to these and other issues relating to membership of it and of other SACREs.

At its meeting on 1st October 2020, the following points were made:

1. When SACREs were first set up in the late 1980s, Local Authorities (LAs) such as the LB Richmond upon Thames generally followed very clear legal procedures when recruiting members - in law it was and is the responsibility of the LA **NOT** the SACRE itself to decide which communities and organisations should have representation on its SACRE and it is the responsibility of the LA to approve the nominees of the its chosen sponsoring bodies.
2. In the past a Council Committee Clerk serviced the SACRE and among her/his duties ensured that membership was secured, maintained and monitored in accordance with these procedures. This role is still performed by the Clerk to the LB Richmond upon Thames SACRE to some extent but unfortunately, it is no longer the case in many SACREs elsewhere, although the functions provided by the Clerk in this respect are still the legal responsibility of each LA.
3. More recent practice seems to indicate that new members to many SACREs are appointed more informally, for example, a member resigning from Group A might suggest someone from her/his community as a replacement or a local teacher with a particular interest in RE might be persuaded to join Group B.
4. Since the initial establishment of many SACREs over thirty years ago, the original records listing the official sponsoring bodies for communities and organisations entitled to representation on SACREs may have been

lost, are perhaps no longer reflective of the local area and indeed some of those communities and organisations may no longer exist.

Planning an intervention or change

Richmond upon Thames SACRE wanted to ensure that its operating systems were robust and effective. To see if there were any elements of CoRE report around the make-up of a LAN that differed from current practice and indeed if it might improve it.

Process

The RE professional that supports the SACRE worked with a team to create documents about where to go to within sponsoring groups and communities when looking to ensure representation on the group was as diverse and inclusive as possible. SACRE could see the practical use of these not only for them but all SACREs, and if there was a legislative change for a LAN.

It was suggested in the present circumstances the most practical way in which to proceed is to support LAs in ensuring that:

1. every SACRE has appropriate membership
2. SACRE members are appointed in accordance with the relevant procedures
3. attendance of members at SACRE Meetings is monitored and recorded
4. members are supported and enabled to play a full and active role in all aspects of the work of the SACRE of which they are a part
5. where possible, membership of SACREs embraces a wider range of key stakeholders in RE as outlined in the Commission on Religious Education's Report.

Implementing the intervention

It is recommended that each LA should have a constitution or Terms of Reference document outlining which nominating bodies and organisations should have a place/places on each of these four groups. (link to NASACRE exemplar constitution <https://nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/SACRE%20constitution.pdf>)

Group A represents 'such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area'. In order to decide on what these should be, the LA will need to do some research as to which groups should be represented in Group A and recognise that these groups might change over time. In the case of **Group A** most of the groups that the LA is looking to for representation will have formal structures at national or local level that can be approached.

It may also be the case, though, that there is a desire to have someone representing a religious tradition or worldview that features in the locally agreed syllabus but where there are few members of that religion or worldview in the immediate area.

It is perhaps helpful - though not essential - for members of **Group A** to have knowledge and understanding of education in state maintained community schools and in some SACREs, teachers from particular religions and worldviews may serve on this group.

Please see page 43 for further guidance about possible nominating bodies for **Group A**.

Group B represents 'the Church of England'. The relevant nominating body for most LAs for **Group B** is usually the Diocese/Diocesan Board of Education for the area and representatives could include local clergy, teachers, including teachers from Church of England schools, governors and members of local Anglican congregations.

Group C is 'a group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area.'

Traditionally, this has been interpreted to mean teachers from the different teaching unions but it might also mean those who come from local head teacher groups or networks of RE teachers in the authority. Some SACREs include teachers from academies in **Group C**, particularly where those academies have chosen to adopt the locally agreed syllabus.

Although it is not a legal requirement to do so, many LAs have a policy of ensuring that all strands of education are represented on their SACRE, appointing teachers to **Group C** who come from EYFS, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, including alternative provision. **Group C** might also include a representative of a local university department

leading on Theology and Religious Studies or involved in training RE teachers. Qualified teachers working as education officers in major places of worship, galleries, museums and other relevant sites locally where learning in RE takes place might also serve on this group.

Group D includes 'persons to represent the local authority'. Traditionally, this has been local councillors from various political parties, perhaps proportionate to their profile in the LA.

In addition, an LA may take the decision to choose whomsoever it sees fit to represent it and its interests – such members of **Group D** might include parents, school governors and any other key stakeholders. Some LAs also appoint officers to **Group D**. If they do so, it is important that the LA examines the issue of conflict of interest. It would be difficult if the officer voted for something that the local authority would not carry through. At least one LA has appointed a Humanist representative to **Group D**.

The LA will approach sponsoring bodies for a nominee or nominees and then appoint the person(s) nominated if they believe that those person(s) will represent the opinions of the sponsoring body.

If the LA believes that a member ceases to represent their sponsoring body then it can remove them from SACRE and ask for another nominee [Education Act 1996: 393(30)].

This does, though, mean that the LA has to firstly make a judgement about what constitutes a sponsoring body. The 1996 Act states: 'Before appointing a person to represent any religion, denomination or associations as a member of the council, the authority shall take all reasonable steps to assure themselves that he is representative of the religion, denomination or associations in question.' [392(2)] and it can only know this if it has made a decision about who is nominating the person in question.

It is worth noting that an LA can ask for more than one representative from a sponsoring body if it is felt that that would be appropriate. This allows there to be balance within each group and for groups to reflect local demographics proportionally. An example of this might be in **Group A** - if there were some Christian denominations demographically more prominent in the area and others less so it might be appropriate for larger denominations to have more than one representative to reflect this situation.

It is not the role of SACRE to find its own members but it can make recommendations if members feel that the LA is overlooking an important group that should be represented in one of its groups.

SACREs need people who can make a positive contribution to its agendas and work, so often they will be people who are or have been involved in schools or education. If a concern arises with a member, it is appropriate for the Chair to speak with the person concerned and explore any issues that they have with SACRE's business and offer training and support. If this, though, is a persistent issue the LA might go back to the sponsoring body to ask for a more qualified representative of that particular constituency. It is important to note here that this might be difficult if the representative is the leader of that sponsoring body.

Many LAs/SACREs find it useful to have their own Code of Conduct in place (NASACRE exemplar found here <https://nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/Code%20of%20conduct.pdf>) and in any case, should always operate within the relevant protocols of the Council.

1. Attendance Of Members At SACRE Meetings Is Monitored And Recorded

Most SACREs keep a record of attendance of members. Those who do not attend regularly or whose attendance has lapsed completely may be contacted by the Clerk of SACRE in accordance with the SACRE's own protocols (NASACRE exemplar found here <https://nasacre.org.uk/resources/sacre-management>). If a SACRE member is unable to fulfil her/his responsibilities, then the LA and the person's nominating body should be informed so that a replacement may be sought as soon as possible.

The quorum of a SACRE is determined by an Act of Parliament (Education Act 1996) and SACRE's own constitution. The Act of Parliament quite clearly states that for a SACRE to be quorate there must be at least one member from each Group present (A, B, C and D). Some SACRE constitutions allow only one member to be present in each group to ensure there is a quorum, while in other SACRE constitutions there is a requirement that more than one must be present, particularly from Group A where, for example, it may expect at least one non-Christian member must be present. A SACRE or Local Authority cannot change the requirements of the Education Act 1996 but it can change its constitution. If SACRE Meetings are regularly inquorate the first thing to consider is whether these are held at a good time for the majority of members and that meetings are easily accessible. All SACRE meetings must also be open to the public.

2. Members Are Supported And Enabled To Play A Full And Active Role In All Aspects Of The Work Of The SACRE Of Which They Are A Part

There are several key ways in which new and existing SACRE members can be helped to do this.

First, SACREs – perhaps individually, perhaps collectively in local/regional clusters – should offer training for members, particularly those new to their role. NASACRE offers some suitable materials here

(<https://nasacre.org.uk/resources/effective-sacres-training-and-support>). New members could also be ‘buddied up’ with more experienced SACRE colleagues to advise and support them as they negotiate their new responsibilities.

Second, nominating bodies should run a training day - maybe on an annual basis – for all those representing them on SACREs. For some organisations, such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews or Humanists UK, this has been arranged at national level, while others such as Diocesan Boards of Education or teaching unions may wish to provide these locally.

Thirdly, SACREs should – where possible – enable members to participate in wider activities relevant to their role and responsibilities, such as attendance at the annual NASACRE Conference and AGM, other training opportunities and related events.

3. Where Possible, Membership Of SACREs Embraces A Wider Range Of Key Stakeholders In RE As Outlined In The Commission On Religious Education’s Report

LAs and SACREs are encouraged to work with appropriate nominating bodies to ensure that membership of SACREs is as wide as possible within the statutory legal parameters. Suggestions of where, when and how this might be possible are made above in relation to the guidance given about the composition of the different SACRE Groups. SACREs may also choose to co-opt certain people who may have a particular contribution to make to their work. It is also important to note that SACRE Meetings must be held in public, anyone can attend such a meeting and with the Chair’s permission can make a contribution to it.

Evaluating

Having reviewed our SACRE practices around membership through this project we have discovered that in the present law we can do this without a need for a change to becoming a LAN. The points that the CoRE report highlights around extending SACRE membership is something that we approve of, but can go ahead and action within the present legislation. We hope the work that our RE advisor has done around creating a document to help us know where to go for extending our SACRE membership we hope will help more than just our SACRE and LA.

Lesley Prior and members of Richmond Upon Thames SACRE

July 2021

SACRE MEMBERSHIP TOOL

This document gives some suggestions of who an LA might want to draw from to make up their SACRE. LAs need to think about how different religions and worldviews who are part of the make-up of your local community and so all the following suggestions might not be relevant.

Important principle here it is not SACREs gift to decide who sits on them. SACREs might want to make recommendations to the LA to be able to discharge its duties effectively. The LA decide the nomination body, and the nominating bodies decide who is fit for them to represent them on the SACRE.

NASACRE Code of conduct is a useful document to understand <https://nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/Code%20of%20conduct.pdf> in doing this work. It is worth pointing out that not all SACREs will have members of all these bodies – this document is seen as a starting point.

Representing	Name	Postal Address, Email and Phone	Date of Joining, training done	Sponsoring body National body Local body
GROUP A				
Baha'i				National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is, 27 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PD 020 7584 2566 nsa@bahai.org.uk
Buddhism				The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH 020 7834 5858 info@thebuddhistsociety.org
Free Church <i>This is the central link for all free churches.</i>		The following list contains the denominations who are currently represented by the Free Churches Group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASSEMBLIES OF GOD • BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN • BAPTIST UNION OF WALES • CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH 		Sabina Williams, Administrator, SACRE & LA Representatives; The Free Churches Group, 27 Tavistock Square, London. WC1H 9HH sabina.williams@freechurches.org.uk Tel: 0203 651 8334

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY • CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE • CHURCHES IN COMMUNITIES INTERNATIONAL • CONGREGATIONAL FEDERATION • COUNCIL OF AFRICAN & CARIBBEAN CHURCHES UK • COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION • FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST • FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND • FREE METHODIST CHURCH • INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCHES • JOINT COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOR ALL NATIONS • METHODIST CHURCH • MORAVIAN CHURCH • NEW TESTAMENT ASSEMBLY • NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD • OLD BAPTIST UNION • ORDER OF ST LEONARD • PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES • THE SALVATION ARMY • THE UNION OF WELSH INDEPENDENTS • THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH • WESLEYAN REFORM UNION 		
Representing	Name	Postal Address, Email and Phone	Date of Joining, training done	Sponsoring body National body Local body
Christian: Orthodox				Nephon Tsimalis Greek Orthodox Archbishops Office for the UK ntsimalis@gmail.com
Christian: Quaker				Friends House www.quaker.org.uk
Christian: Roman Catholic				Catholic dioceses in your area OR RC Commission for Schools & Colleges, St Edwards House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, BR5 2SR Tel: 01689 829331 Fax: 01689 829255 enquiries@educationcommission.org.uk

Representing	Name	Postal Address, Email and Phone	Date of Joining, training done	Sponsoring body National body Local body
Hinduism				<p>Local Hindu community</p> <p>Hindu Council of Britain Hindu Council UK Secretariat Office 22 King Street Southall UB2 4DA Chair: Email: umeshchander@aol.com Mobile: 07903804656</p> <p>Hindu educational board info@hindueducationboarduk.org https://hindueducationboarduk.org/</p>
Humanism				<p>Humanists UK 39 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB education@humanism.org.uk</p>
Pagan				<p>Pagan Federation vicepresident@paganfederation.co.uk</p>
Zoroastrian				<p>Zoroastrian centre, 440 Alexandra Ave, Rayners Lane, Harrow HA2 9TL. 020 8866 0765</p>
Rastafarian				<p>shawn.sobers@uwe.ac.uk Dr Shawn-Naphati Sobers is an expert in Rastafarianism and could be a useful link to find a representative within this community</p>
Jain				<p>Himanshu Jain – Institute of Jainology hj@thoughtagile.co.uk</p>
Islam: Sunni				<p>Muslim Teacher Association info@mta-uk.org Muslim Council of Britain https://mcb.org.uk media@mcb.org.uk Local Muslim contacts (Mosque or council or mosques)</p>
Islam: Shi'a				<p>Al Kohei Foundation Chevening Rd, London NW6 6TN 020 7372 4049 info@alkhoei.org https://www.scottishahlulbaytsociety.org/cementing-friendships/</p>

				<p>Email: info@scottishahlulbaytsociety.org</p> <p>Head Office Address: United Nations House Scotland, 44 Frederick Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1EX</p> <p>Local Muslim contacts (Mosque or council of mosques)</p>
Islam: Ismaili				<p>Ismaili centre</p> <p>https://the.ismaili/ismailicentres/london</p>
The Ahmadiyya community				<p>Ahmadiyya Muslim association UK</p> <p>https://ahmadiyya.uk/</p>
Judaism				<p>The Board of Deputies of British Jews 1 Torriano Mews, London NW5 2RZ 020 7543 5400 Jackie Emery email: jackie.emery@bod.org.uk</p>
Sikhi				<p>Network of Sikh Organisations Lord Inderjit Singh, CBE, Director 43 Dorset Road, Merton Park ,London SW19 3EZ Tel: 020-8540-4148 Email: info@nsouk.co.uk</p>
<p>GROUP B The Church of England</p> <p><i>For example this might include...</i></p>				
Diocesan Board representative				<p>https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools</p>
Secondary teacher				
Primary Teacher				
Governor				
Minister (Clergy/Lay)				
<p>Group C - Teachers</p> <p><i>For example, this might include some of the following along with a representative from a SCITT; university ITE providers; local education providers, e.g. museums & galleries</i></p>				

NEU				NEU HQ Hamilton House, Mabledon Place. London. WC1H 9BD 0345 811 8111
NAS/UWT				Kathy Duggan Kathy.duggan@exec.nasuwt.org.uk
Teacher rep primary				
Teacher rep secondary				
Academy / Free School rep				
Local Headteachers & Deputies group Primary rep				
Local Headteachers & Deputies group Secondary rep				
Special schools network group rep				
RE network/local group representative				
Group D – LA group <i>Many LAs will allocate councillors proportional to the minority and majority party on the council</i>				
LA education representative				

LA representative Councillor				
LA representative Councillor				
LA representative Councillor				
LA representative Councillor				
LA governor rep				

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