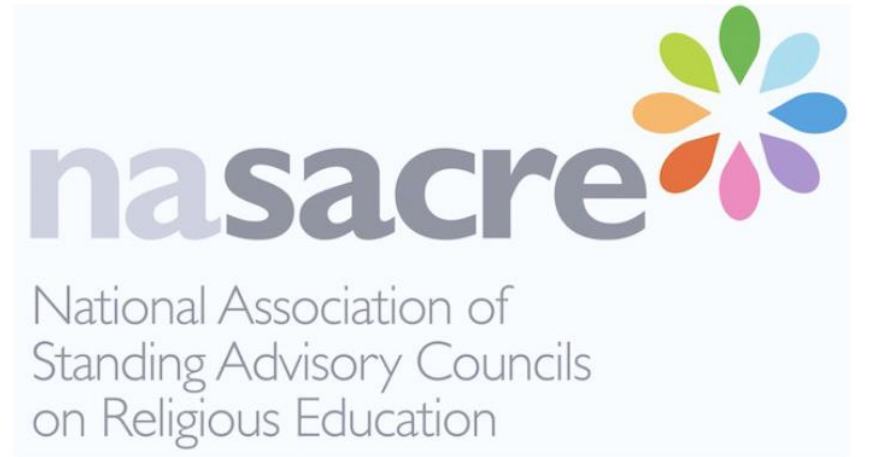


# Reviewing The Membership Of Your SACRE



- supporting
- strengthening
- promoting

# Welcome and Introductions

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  - Professional Adviser to eleven SACREs in London
  - Involved in the *Still Standing* Report with LB Richmond
- SACRE: [www.nasacre.org.uk/useful-documents/](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/useful-documents/)**



# The Aims for Tonight's Training

Within this session, we will:

- consider the legal requirements around SACRE membership
- discuss how membership may be constituted as flexibly as possible within these legal requirements
- remind ourselves of NASACRE's advice and support for Las
- have an opportunity for questions!

# How did SACREs begin?

- **Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) have their origins in the 1944 Education Act when the government established Local Education Authorities to maintain schools. One of their responsibilities was to establish a ‘conference’ to produce an agreed syllabus. Such a conference was to be established each time a local education authority believed that it needed the syllabus to be reviewed. A local education authority could also establish a ‘standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE)’ if it thought it was appropriate in its local context. These SACREs were not mandatory and not all local authorities had one.**
- **SACREs were later reformed and reconstituted by the Education Reform Act 1988, becoming permanent bodies with legal powers.**

# The Role of a SACRE

- SACREs were reformed in 1988 to advise the local authority on religious education in community (formally 'county') and voluntary controlled schools; and, collective worship in community schools which are maintained by the authority (Local Education Authorities became known as 'Local Authorities' in 2004 as a result of their expanding role).
- SACREs are also responsible for ensuring that pupils in the local authority's maintained schools receive their statutory entitlement in RE, of the highest possible quality.

# The Composition of SACREs

SACREs have a very particular structure. In England a SACRE has four groups and in Wales three groups. The 1996 Education Act, Section 390 (4), states that the representative groups required are:

- 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;
- except in Wales, the Church of England;
- associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area; and
- the authority.

# Membership of the Four Groups

- 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.
- If the local authority believes that a person no longer represents the relevant sponsoring body, it has the power to remove the person and ask for someone else to be nominated.
- SACREs may also appoint members who are referred to as ‘co-opted’. Such members have the right to speak but not to vote.

# Challenges to the System!

- does the LA have – and regularly review – a list of sponsoring bodies for each group?
- who is responsible for managing membership?
- are formal protocols followed in practice?



**Group A** *'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 communities 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.

## **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**
- **members of local Anglican congregations.**

# Group C

*'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** *‘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.**

# Other Points to Consider?

- 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.

# Other Points to Consider?

- SACREs need people who can make a positive contribution to their 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.

# Questions!



# Thank You and Keep in Touch!

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