

30 years of NASACRE: SACREs for the Future

NASACRE's Pearl Anniversary Conference, with more than 100 delegates from over 60 SACREs across the country, focused on some of the treasures of the past and looked forward to the golden nuggets of the future. Taking the lead from NASACRE's revised 2023 Constitution, which was approved by conference, Dr Kathryn Wright's keynote set the tone for the day. She challenged SACREs to recognise the things that they do well, and the role the NASACRE has played in strengthening, supporting, representing and celebrating the achievements of SACREs. Her vision for the future of SACREs is that they should continue to develop partnerships with Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and build better relationships with the government and faith organisations. SACREs need to take a lead in developing the worldviews approach to RE and working to raise awareness of the need for more RE teachers to be recruited.

Recognising that there are challenges ahead formed a major part of the second keynote, delivered by the Rt Hon Charles Clarke, Patron of NASACRE. He identified the fractured structure of the current education system as probably one of the greatest challenges, but said that if NASACRE and SACREs get involved as the next election approaches in conversations with politicians, there is an opportunity to influence the future. Charles sees the key strength of a SACRE as being able to promote effective social cohesion on a local level, and believes that the provision of good RE in schools is a key to achieving that.

Another key challenge, and one that was picked up by Dr David Hampshire in his review of the SACRE annual reports, is the lack of funding and resources made available to many SACREs. This reflects the fact that many Local Authorities do not yet fully appreciate the value that SACRE can offer their communities.

NASACRE and SACREs need to talk openly about the challenges facing communities regarding social cohesion and emphasise the unique position they hold in being able to bring communities together.

If SACREs can learn from each other (and the review of their 2022 annual reports should help them do that), proclaim their achievements more confidently and hold Local Authorities openly to account, they can begin to influence the situation for the better.

Kathryn Wright reminded conference,

"We have a pearl - RE - and the best pearls are reflective. Challenges and opportunities lie ahead. The world is not the same as it was and SACREs need to think creatively, within the systems that exist. If RE is a treasured pearl, we need keep it on display and admire it."

Fishmongers' Hall, London

22 May 2023