



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH WEST



Daily Service: How faith communities contribute to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration in the South West of England

Final Report

to Government Office for the South West
and The South West Council of Faiths

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Executive Summary

- The research reported here focused on faith communities in selected areas in the South West of England that exhibit multiple deprivation. It sought to establish the extent to which these faith groups engaged in wider social and community activities, especially regeneration initiatives. The areas included urban wards designated as Neighbourhood Renewal areas and other relatively deprived wards.
- The selected wards were Hartcliffe & Withywood and Easton & Lawrence Hill in Bristol, Barton & Tredworth and Westgate in Gloucester City, St Peter and the Waterfront and Sutton & Mountgold in Plymouth, Penwith District in West Cornwall, and Ilfracombe Central, East and West wards in North Devon.
- The initial audit of faith groups in these areas resulted in contacts with some 70 faith groups, of which about 50% reported that they were involved with community social welfare activities for young people, mothers and children, the homeless, the elderly and others in need whom the official agencies often fail to reach.
- In addition these faith groups brought significant resources to their local community, especially buildings for community use, the services of many volunteers and the provision of some funded community workers.
- Faith groups have a long-term commitment to caring for the communities that they serve, and often provide a space which is a focus for that community; they are also valued for their independence from political and other interests.
- The large majority of faith groups contacted were Christian; only in Bristol and Gloucester were there significant numbers of non-Christian minority ethnic faiths.
- Many of the Christian groups were well embedded in their localities, and showed a deep understanding of the problems experienced by people living in their local community. Much informal welfare work was going on through the efforts of individual members of those faith groups. Service to the community is a core value for many of these groups.
- Relatively few of the faith groups contacted had any experience of involvement with regeneration initiatives, nor had they received any funding for projects related to neighbourhood renewal. In most cases they had not sought such involvement, often because of a lack of capacity to go through the application process or to manage the resulting project if they were successful.
- Other reasons given for their non-involvement included a lack of knowledge of the opportunities available, a fear of the bureaucracy involved, an unwillingness to work in partnership or to submit to evaluation of their project. There was also a perception that faith groups were excluded from such projects, and that they would find their values scorned or threatened.

- Minority ethnic non-Christian groups proved particularly difficult to contact. Some information was gained from umbrella organisations, such as cultural societies, but it was clear that these faith communities engage in very little social welfare type work with local residents who are not of their faith. These groups in particular felt excluded from many neighbourhood renewal and other regeneration initiatives and have become increasingly defensive in the face of hostile community reaction post 9/11.
- Local governance, funding agencies and officers in the field need better information on the size and distribution of all the faith communities in their areas, and a better understanding of their needs.
- The failure to draw faith groups into regeneration partnerships and projects means the loss of their expertise, local knowledge and other potentially valuable contributions. There is a need for better communication, and more active dissemination to faith groups of the information on the opportunities and criteria for being part of these projects. The application process needs simplification and more help should be given to those faith groups that want to make an application.
- Faith groups should respond to the increasing number of opportunities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal initiatives by having the courage to make applications and by being willing to embrace partnership working.
- Successful participation by faith groups in regeneration initiatives come where there are key individuals, often the faith leader, who make it happen. A willingness of all involved to work in partnership also helps, as does having funded professionals working with the faith groups,.
- There are many ways in which the processes for engaging faith groups in neighbourhood renewal and other regeneration projects could be improved. Clearer guidelines are needed so that all involved understand that faith groups are eligible for funding. More and better communication is needed between all parties. Measures should be taken to address faith groups' lack of capacity through the provision of small grants, training and mentoring schemes.
- Importantly clarity is urgently required from local governance and funding agencies to make clear to officials and communities that faith groups are welcome and should be invited to participate in Local Strategic Partnerships and regeneration projects. Faith group engagement at all levels of project development and service delivery should be encouraged with only a single proviso that proselytising is unacceptable.

1 Introduction

The project reported here was commissioned from a team at the University of the West of England in July 2003 by Government Office South West in partnership with the South West Council of Faiths and the South West Churches Regional Forum. The authors of this report are grateful for the advice and support of the members of the steering group¹ set up to oversee the project, but the views expressed here are those of the authors alone.

The aim of the project was to study the extent of faith groups' involvement in wider social and welfare work in their communities, and of the benefits that these activities can bring to that wider community. It also sought to explore both why faith groups get involved in regeneration initiatives, and the barriers which deter them from such involvement in regeneration projects and from seeking 'official' funding for their activities².

Over recent years there has been growing recognition of the potentially valuable role of faith communities in assisting the growth of social cohesion within their locality and in the delivery of a wide range of social welfare and community services, often to the most isolated and deprived members of their community. There have been a number of studies in different parts of Britain on aspects of this involvement, and official policy has become more explicit in seeking to engage faith communities in the delivery of neighbourhood renewal type programmes (see Appendix 4 for a brief review). The message currently emanating from the government is that faith groups have a vital role to play in community renewal, and that rhetoric is being reflected in policy development.

The opportunities for faith groups to become involved in neighbourhood renewal initiatives are growing but there is still relatively little information on the extent to which this involvement is occurring, nor on how it can best be facilitated. For the South West region the key questions addressed by the study reported here are:

- what community activity is happening through faith groups in deprived areas of the South West?
- to what extent are faith groups in the region already involved in neighbourhood renewal initiatives?
- how can their potentially valuable contributions be maximised to the benefit of their local communities?

The term 'faith groups' is used here to mean worshipping groups with a regular meeting place or venue located within the target areas selected for this research project, ranging from churches to mosques and meeting houses. It is difficult to establish a single term that will be appropriate for all faiths³.

The faith groups that were the object of this research were located in selected wards from Neighbourhood Renewal areas and other deprived wards across the South West. These wards all showed evidence of high levels of multiple deprivation, as demonstrated by their position on the 2000 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Also all have been eligible for regeneration and/or renewal funding from a number of Government-funded programmes over recent years.

¹ See Appendix 2

² the objectives of the project are given in Appendix 3

³ see for instance Angels and Advocates, 2002, Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber Ltd, pp11/12

The wards selected were:

Bristol City	Hartcliffe and Withywood, Easton and Lawrence Hill
Gloucester City	Barton & Tredworth, Westgate
Plymouth	St Peter and the Waterfront, Sutton & Mountgold
Cornwall	Penwith District – all wards
North Devon	Ilfracombe Central, East and West

Occasionally a place of worship just outside the boundaries of the selected wards was included if it drew a significant number of people from within the target area, or if it was engaged in community activity within the target area. Interestingly we have also discovered at least one case where a faith group several miles from our target area has actually been involved with communal activity in that area.

The project was designed to be carried out in three stages. The first stage was to map the location of the faith groups within the target areas and to conduct an initial audit to identify the extent of their involvement in community/social welfare activities within their locality, excluding the conduct of religious services or explicitly religious teaching or proselytising. The next stage was intended to be a follow up postal questionnaire to be sent to all those groups that indicated their willingness to participate in a more detailed survey. The last task for the research team was to identify and write up case studies of best practice of the involvement of faith groups in regeneration programmes in their localities.

As it turned out, difficulties in establishing successful contacts meant that the audit stage continued to the end of the project even as the more detailed postal survey was carried out. The results have indicated extensive involvement of faith groups in community/social work in their communities, and some interesting and valuable insights have been gained into the difficulties they experience in becoming involved in official regeneration projects.

Section 2 below reports on the mapping and audit exercise and the postal survey of contacts. The results of that research and many examples of the range of activities that faith groups undertake are presented in Section 3, including:

- the extent of faith groups' involvement with social/community work,
- the resources that faith groups can bring to their communities,
- what is special about faith groups,
- the history of their involvement with regeneration projects,
- the real and perceived barriers to that involvement,
- suggestions for how faith groups' undoubted and potentially valuable contribution can be better achieved.

Finally, Section 4 of this report presents the conclusions and recommendations that have resulted from this research.

In addition, eight case studies have been compiled to illustrate different aspects of how faith groups become involved in social/community welfare activities and to identify key lessons as 'best practice' examples. These are presented in a separate document accompanying this report entitled 'Daily Service: How Faith Groups contribute to neighbourhood regeneration and renewal in the South West of England: Case Studies'. They include analysis of each case terms of their origins, outcomes and problems.

2 The Stages of the Research

2.1 Mapping/Audit Of Faith Groups⁴

The first task in this research was to map the faith groups in our target areas.

A list of places of worship and religious organisations for each of the target areas was compiled using denominational directories, public listings etc. The list was extended as contacts were asked about other faith groups in their area (a process known as 'snowballing').

It proved unexpectedly difficult to establish the initial contacts with faith groups. Gatekeepers were often identified as a local faith leader whom we tried to contact by telephone. In many places our enquiries were answered by an answer machine, or by telephones that were allowed to ring out unanswered. Leaving messages on the answer machines only rarely brought a response. The most fruitful time to call proved to be late afternoon and/or early evening. It is clear that many faith group leaders are very busy people who are often difficult to track down. When contact was made with an appropriate person at a target address, a simple questionnaire was used by the researchers to complete the audit of that faith groups' activities over the telephone.

A further difficulty that reduced the potential sample was that in many places, especially in Penwith, a single minister or faith leader often covered several places of worship. One Methodist minister listed six separate addresses from our list as being his responsibility, another had thirteen!

Table A (in Appendix 1 below) shows the number and variety of faith groups identified in each of the target areas, giving a potential sample of 138 listed faith groups. Eventually approximately 70 successful contacts were made with faith groups claiming a total of over 8,500 members.

The large majority of faith groups identified and contacted in our target areas were Christian, mostly from the mainstream denominations. This is not that surprising, given the 2001 Census of Population results on ethnic origins and religious beliefs in these areas, which show that between 75% and 85% of the population reported having religious beliefs, of whom 66% - 89% said that they were Christian (see Appendix 1 Table C). In the Bristol Lawrence Hill and Easton wards, and the Gloucester wards of Barton & Westgate, 66 - 68% were Christian with 16% - 22% non-Christian, mostly Muslim⁵.

It proved very difficult to establish contact with non-Christian faiths in our target areas. Bristol and Gloucester are the places with the highest numbers of non-Christian places of worship in the South West, elsewhere in the region the numbers are small. For example, there are very few places of worship for non-Christian faiths in Penwith. Muslims and Jews in the area travel to Truro for worship, although there are Buddhists and a lively alternative spiritual movement there. However the latter tend not to get involved in welfare, community or social type work in the wider community.

⁴ The full findings from Stage 1 of the project were reported in December 2003 'Daily Service: How Faith Communities can contribute to Neighbourhood Renewal and Regeneration, Interim Report, Draft For Discussion' by Marion Jackson, Richard Kimberlee and Stuart Barrett, Faculty of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences, University of the West of England, Bristol, December 2003.

⁵ These figures give a good indication of the racial and religious mix in these areas in spite of the acknowledged inaccuracies of the 2001 Census of Population in inner city areas: O'Beirne (2004) p viii also reports that 74% of people in England & Wales describe themselves as Christian see for example Home Office (1999)

2.2 Survey of Faith Groups' involvement with Regeneration Initiatives

Having made the initial contact with faith groups we asked them to participate in the next stage of the research: a survey of their activities and involvement in regeneration and renewal activity. There were no refusals. In fact many faith groups were keen to participate because the subject of the research raised strong emotions. Each faith group was sent one of two postal questionnaires to complete (See Appendix 6). Although there were questions common to both, one questionnaire focused on the reasons why the faith group had not got involved in regeneration funding initiatives, while the other was for faith groups who had won funding. The latter focused on the reasons why they had applied and the processes involved in submitting a funding application.

Our secondary data search led us to identify a number of reasons preventing faith groups from getting involved with regeneration initiatives , including the following:

- Motivational barriers: faith groups are seen as lacking hope, energy, confidence, trust in neighbours, and feel resentment over a lack of recognition (Home Office, 1999).
- Ignored by officials: there is evidence to suggest that some council departments remain silent and even sometimes embarrassed to deal with the religious sector (Smith, 2000).
- Values: regeneration professionals may face difficulties in trying to relate secular, liberal values to a variety of religious values (Farnell et al, 2003, Smith, 2000).
- Capacity: faith groups may not have the resources to get involved with regeneration. This would include human resources as well as physical resources like a computer, office space etc (Farnell et al, 2003).
- Community antipathy: there are some faith groups who believe that elements within the secular establishment are prejudiced against religion as a whole, and this mistrust mitigates against enthusiasm for partnership working (Smith, 2002).
- Inter and Intra faith disharmony: it is often acknowledged that faith groups tend not to have developed successful networks amongst themselves and often simply involve themselves with their own communities (McDonnell, 2003a).
- Modus operandi: it is believed that faith groups have a distinctive preference for informal ways of working that conflict with the managerialist approaches currently in vogue amongst local authorities and regeneration agencies (McDonnell, 2003b).
- Politically incorrect: conservative leaders have frequently vocalised the view that faith groups are excluded from involvement because they are perceived as politically incorrect by government agencies and regeneration professionals (Ward, 2001).
- Focus on their own: it is believed that certain faith groups (e.g. the Jews) prefer to focus entirely on their own members (Harris, 2001).
- Remoteness: faith groups in rural areas particularly feel that they are on the periphery and of no concern to regional centres (McDonnell, 2003b).

The questionnaires directly tested these explanations, and also included open-ended questions to invite further comment and to explore other explanations not revealed by previous research.. Faith groups received their questionnaire with a stamped addressed envelope to return to the researchers.

This stage of the research proved more difficult and protracted than initially anticipated. After six weeks the return rate was poor. The researchers made follow up telephone calls to clarify any outstanding issues and encourage completion. Although this bolstered the sample, the response rate was still below 50%. Only one faith group refused to get involved any further, the rest promised to return the questionnaire. But it became clear that, despite having agreed to receive a questionnaire, many faith groups simply did not have the capacity to respond to this task. To overcome this, and to ensure that we obtained results from as large a sample as possible, the researchers offered telephone interviews and visits to assist with completion of the questionnaire. A third of the data collected were acquired through these methods. This took some considerable time but it did enable us to conduct more face-to-face enquiries than we initially anticipated.

In spite of these difficulties, contact with the majority of Christian groups at their place of worship was largely unproblematic, after the initial contact had been made. However contacting non-Christian groups, especially faith groups representative of the black minority ethnic (BME) sector through temples, mosques and gurdwaras was extraordinary difficult. If the telephone was answered, the query was often referred elsewhere which often proved fruitless in terms of acquiring participation in our surveys. Researchers also encountered some language barriers and some difficulty in identifying an appropriate respondent for the survey.

Contact with BME groups across the region was best developed through umbrella organizations, such as the Bristol Muslim Cultural Society, who were able to provide relevant contact details. However, even if permission was gained to forward a questionnaire, these were not returned. They were sometimes passed on to more knowledgeable members, or were awaiting management committee approval to complete, which essentially meant they disappeared. This in itself raises questions around the responsiveness of such faith groups. Perhaps they do not have the capacity to respond to regeneration initiatives and clearly they do not have organised channels for communication to external organizations. Again visits to these faith groups proved the most fruitful approach but even these weren't always successful.

2.3 The Case Studies of Best Practice

The final stage of the research was to identify and write up a selection of case studies of 'best practice' in the engagement of faith groups in regeneration initiatives. There were quite considerable numbers of faith groups amongst those contacted in the course of this research that could have been selected to reveal examples of good practice. Those presented with the results of the research reported here were chosen to illustrate the varied a range of community focused project work undertaken by faith groups as possible (often in partnership with other organisations). They are:

1. Action Group for Halcyon Project, Plymouth
2. All Saints House Project, Plymouth
3. GARAS: Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
4. Harbour Light Community Project, Hayle, Cornwall
5. Penzance & Newlyn Breakfast Project, Cornwall
6. Spinney Doorstep Green Action Group, Camborne, Cornwall
7. The Sikh Resource Centre, Bristol
8. The South Bristol Community Church Trust's New Withywood Centre

Further details from the case studies are included in what follows in this report, and the case studies themselves are published in a separate document⁷.

⁷ Daily Service: How Faith Groups contribute to Neighbourhood Regeneration and Renewal in the South West of England: Case Studies'

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Faith Groups' involvement with Social/Community Work

3.1.1 Overview of results

The results of both the mapping/audit contacts with faith groups in our target areas across the South West, and the information gathered from the subsequent postal questionnaires, led us to conclude that very many faith groups engage in social welfare and community work within their local communities.

Around 50% of all the groups contacted for the audit in stage 1 of the research reported that they were working with young people, with children/toddlers and/or with older people⁸. There was some interesting variation between the different areas. The percentage working with these three categories was highest in the Bristol and Plymouth wards and the lowest in Penwith, Cornwall. This may reflect a higher level of need in the inner areas of the South West's two largest cities, but it should also be remembered that many of the groups contacted in Cornwall were very small and perhaps lacked the capacity to run these sort of groups for their wider community. In addition most groups reported that their buildings were often used by many other community groups, and by health clinics, local authority agencies etc.

A lot of these activities, such as running youth clubs, organising luncheon clubs for the elderly, etc., have been developed over many years in response to a specific unmet need in the local community. Much more welfare work is under-taken more informally on an individual basis, such as visiting the sick and housebound. It is almost impossible to quantify this kind of activity.

More detail of the extent of faith groups' involvement in social and community welfare work was revealed in the responses to our postal questionnaire.

"Lots of good work goes on in informal ways, cannot measure it. An informal flow of confidence and neighbourly love – it does not need funding" (Anglican Vicar Gloucester)

Many Christian faith groups have developed an explicit policy that expressly commits them to as much community involvement as possible.

"... sees the church as a community facility" (Methodist Minister, Gloucester)

The mission statements of many of our survey respondents reflected this. Most combine an aspiration to bring people to their faith and to serve the community in some way. There is often a strong message about demonstrating their faith through helping the community while many also recognise the importance of providing a place or facilities to serve community needs.

"Demonstrating the love of Christ through what we say and do."

"To extend the love of God in Jesus to everyone. To provide facilities that meet local need."

"To help in any way we can with the resources we have, ie building, people, etc."

⁸ see Appendix 1 Table B

Responding faith groups also demonstrated a keen awareness of the problems faced by their communities. When asked to identify any local problem that they had tried to address, the responses were as set out in Table 1 below.

It is striking that the list of problems identified is quite broad. Apart from the often-anticipated problems associated with neighbourhood renewal areas, such as young people, drugs and homelessness, these faith groups have picked up a range of other issues that clearly need to be addressed.

Interestingly, some of these are problems that are often harder to define and therefore less likely to be addressed anywhere else, notably alienation, low self-esteem, loneliness and destitution. The faith groups also recognise problems around families as being important but none directly mentioned crime. Is crime a problem with which faith groups feel they should not be involved, or is it less of an issue in these communities than headlines sometimes suggest?

Table 1 Local Problems identified by Faith Groups

<i>Five faith groups identified:</i>	
Drugs	Youth
Homelessness	
<i>Three faith groups identified:</i>	
Parent and Toddler needs	Destitution
Loneliness	
<i>Two faith groups identified:</i>	
Bereavement	Childcare
Low self esteem	Family problems
Children's needs	Single Parents
<i>One faith group identified:</i>	
Personal skill development	Employment skill development
Alienation	Prostitution
Community problems	Domestic Violence
Spiritual welfare	Debt
Litter	Alcoholism
Housebound people	Mental Health
Aids	Parenting skills

On the whole Christian communities appeared to do the most outreach work to embrace others in the community irrespective of their faith. For example:

- a Salvation Army community hosted a self styled Poverty Action Group which helps homeless people to find accommodation, food and transport,
- an independent, evangelical Christian group runs a regular luncheon group for poorer community members and also runs a visiting hospital service for local people,

- many Christian faith groups run activities for age specific groups like toddler groups, youth clubs and senior citizen groups,
- an inner city Baptist church runs English classes for immigrant women and a mentoring scheme for teenagers.

3.1.2 A Range of Examples

Further examples of often innovative responses to local needs were found across all the areas targeted in this research, as described below.

Young people

Many respondents said that they are trying to address the needs of young people, ranging from work with school children to single parents and those needing help into work. Individual faith group leaders were involved with Sure Start as board members etc.

Nightstop, Gloucestershire

Volunteers, the majority of whom are recruited from local churches, offer accommodation to 16-25 year olds with nowhere to go for the night

The Bizz, Gloucester

A city centre Christian led open youth project in what used to be a Methodist chapel. The building now known as Star 66 is being refurbished before being sold to its users

Hayle Youth Project, Cornwall

Youngsters were congregating on the streets and ignoring youth club provision – so a church-led initiative raised £300,000 over 5 years; employing a detached youth worker and two part-time helpers. Run by a partnership and seeking five year funding.

Elderly

Torch Fellowship for the Blind

A meeting once a month facilitated by members of a Cornwall Baptist church

CHIN: Christian Help-line, Newlyn

Befriending, and arranging hospital transport

Significant problems of loneliness and bereavement are identified in many places. It was a recurrent theme in discussion with faith leaders.

Homelessness

This is a significant problem across the South West, even in the less urbanised areas of Penwith. The Salvation Army specifically targets this problem everywhere, often in partnership with other churches and local councils.

Penzance & Newyn Breakfast Project

Hosted by the Salvation Army, this is an ecumenical project using volunteers from the local churches to offer breakfast to people who are homeless every day of the year. It also has two outreach workers, and provides space for other service organisations to contact the homeless and offer help.

New Connections

Churches Together in Camborne run a project for people who are homeless which employs 25 people

Poverty

The provision of space for other service organisations needing to reach those in need was also mentioned more than once, so for example church halls serve as once a week locations for eg health clinics, drop-ins, housing services etc.

"...opened our church to various organisations who alongside us want to help the community deal with deprivation, debt, loneliness, coping as single parents..."

GOFA

Good Old Furniture Available

Based at a Methodist church - donated furniture is made available to those in need

Lack of skills

It can be argued that many faith-based projects allow the participants, and the volunteers involved to enhance their skills in many ways, but there are also examples of projects specifically targeting skill development.

Direct Mission

Faced with the problems of the long term unemployed in the mid 1980's in Redruth, Cornwall, a Christian group formed this not for profit company to offer training and opportunities for skill development. It failed to gain official start-up funding but was supported by the Methodist church, and drew on the time of volunteers. It grew to an annual turnover of £1.5m, with up to 150 employees and thousands of trainees, and spread its activities far beyond Cornwall to the rest of Britain and into Europe. The company went on to operate under independent management but without the explicit links to the churches.

Environment

Few of the faith communities contacted for this research said that they were involved with projects aiming to protect or improve local green spaces, although many of the building/refurbishment projects could be seen as restoring the built environment.

United Christian Action, Hartcliffe and Withywood NOISE Project

A partnership of four Christian groups on this estate run an annual NOISE project involving over 100 young volunteers from around the city of Bristol. Over a period of a few days they carry out community projects identified UCA. These include litter picking, repainting railings, weeding community areas, painting over graffiti, shrub clearance and gardening. The project has also included a children's activity afternoon.

An example of a project that had received funding from the Countryside Agency under its Doorstep Green programme is the Spinney Action Group at Camborne, West Cornwall⁹. Here a piece of scrub land adjacent to the parish church and owned by the rectory has been transformed into a community space open to all, with features such as a teenage shelter installed in response to consultation with local residents and organisations such as the school and health clinic about what they would like to see.

Other

Faith leaders often get involved in other aspects of community life, particularly where an independent and/or mediating role is required.

"The church was seen as an independent arbiter and invited into a plant which was to close, making 300 redundant" (Anglican Vicar, Cornwall)

When all agencies fail

What is clear is that faith groups perform a valuable role in their community in helping local people who face desperate problems. Several faith leaders talk about their faith group being the 'final agency' there to help people when other services and agencies like the DSS, Social Services, Health etc. can do no more. On our visits we encountered numerous examples of faith groups helping out people who were in desperate straits:

- Money raised to pay excessive debts or funeral expenses.
- Furniture donated to families who moved to the local area with nothing,
- Christmas and New Year's Day meals cooked for 26 homeless people when they had nowhere else go
- Hours and hours spent listening and supporting people who face insurmountable problems.

⁹ See the accompanying document 'Daily Service: How Faith Groups contribute to Neighbourhood Regeneration and Renewal in the South West of England: Case Studies' for more detail of this project

3.2 Resources that Faith Groups can bring to their Communities

3.2.1 Buildings

There are many examples of faith groups seeking to make their buildings more available for community use¹⁰. In many places, the church or chapel hall is the only potential meeting space and, as such, is a valuable resource for the local community. Such rooms or halls are often used by a wide range of groups. At the same time funding the up-keep of these buildings is a major problem for small congregations. They are often listed buildings, which limits what can be done with them, while fundraising for repairs and maintenance is a major burden.

Drop-in centre, Baptist church Gloucester open all day opposite job-centre – soup, tea, coffee sold at subsidised rate, run by volunteers and used by about 30 people per day

Christian groups hosted an average of at least five other community groups in their buildings on a regular basis, including uniform organizations, other voluntary & community sector (VCS) projects and organizations, local crèches, history societies, resident groups, environmental action groups, job clubs, luncheon clubs, fitness clubs, stroke clubs etc. The majority declare that between 51 and 150 people benefit from their buildings on a regular basis; a third have under 50 people benefiting while four faith groups declared that their buildings are used by over 250 people from the community on a regular basis.

Non-Christian groups in the region were less likely to have outside groups using their premises. Two Sikh communities run large communal lunches, host language classes and run activities for elderly members. One of these also ran citizenship style classes to introduce younger members to the historical events and places in the UK and the role of the royal family. However these were invariably aimed at members of their own faith community.

Several faith groups have relinquished control of their buildings to enable community leaders and community groups to make better use of their assets. As one relatively small group said:

“...[we are] offering buildings rather than people power”

This move is sometimes prompted by a declining membership who can no longer afford to maintain the building by themselves. One parish even gave its church hall away to a community group who could then access funding for refurbishment that was not available to the church itself. While several have sought and gained funding from a variety of sources to make their buildings more suitable and accessible for community use, most realise that they can only realise potential funding if they enter into partnerships with community or voluntary groups.

Church Hall, C of E Gloucester

90% used by non-church groups, many paying very low rents; users include the local junior school, Afro Caribbean Association Kids club, after school/holiday play and educational activities, Table Tennis, Karate, Cubs, Ventures, Beavers, Scouts,

In many places there is a consciousness of the importance of church buildings to tourism – and therefore active work going on to make them welcoming and informative. Using buildings in this way also aids regeneration by attracting visitors and their spending to the area.

¹⁰See also Finneron D & Dinham A 2002 'Building on Faith: faith buildings in neighbourhood renewal' for some interesting case studies

"... we have cleared pews at the back of the church to make a visitor centre....and received a Millennium grant to improve access" (Anglican Vicar ,Cornwall)

But there is perhaps a danger that this might reinforce an attitude that sees churches as part of heritage rather than potential partners in social regeneration. This may be especially true of other volunteer groups, eg West Cornwall Network : *"Faith groups [are] not often included in their initiatives" (Anglican Vicar, Cornwall).*

3.2.2 Volunteers

These are the second major resource that faith groups bring to their communities, and not only through their role with organised projects and activities such as youth clubs and luncheon clubs. Many members of faith groups are active in other ways in their local communities. This is not necessarily directly because of their faith but it is often seen as part of their Christian service to the community by the individuals concerned.

The majority of responding faith groups contacted for our audit simply stated that 'many' of their members were involved as volunteers with numerous activities and projects in their local community where they have identified a need. Of those that could give specific numbers, a third identified up to ten members who work voluntarily for their local community, a quarter had between eleven and fifty volunteers, with the rest identifying over fifty volunteers doing some work in their local community.

This is a significant resource from which neighbourhood renewal areas could benefit. In one small Anglican parish in West Cornwall 47 out of the 50 people on the electoral roll were volunteering in some way; some helping with aspects of running the church, others in a wide range of other activities.

Methodist circuit in St Ives

Members include local Councillors, volunteers with the Lifeboat Guild, Hospital Friends, Scout leaders, charity shop volunteers, school governors, museum volunteers, and a New Start member

3.2.3 Funded Workers

The employment of professional social and community workers is often seen as a high priority for faith groups concerned to address social problems in their area. In fact those faith groups who have benefited from funding have often relied on the employment of a community or social worker to kick start the development of a community project idea.

In our survey we asked what respondents would do with a grant of £40,000. By far the most frequent response was to employ a youth or community worker. There were many examples of funds being raised to enable faith groups to employ such workers, and of applications for this kind of funding being prepared. In these cases the place of worship provides a base and backup for the community worker.

Hayle Elwyn School Club

Church Urban Fund helps pay for worker to take kids to school, collect them and run an after school club until 6pm. Helps single mothers access work

3.3 What is Special about Faith Groups?

Respondents identified many benefits brought to the wider community by the presence of faith groups and places of worship. They are in the community for the long term and bring a degree of loyalty and commitment to the area. They have the buildings; they are hands on the ground; they bring a genuine sense of care and concern.

*“...organisational expertise, care and counselling,
catalyst for community regeneration. Centres of social activity.....”*

As much of this research has confirmed, there is also a strong commitment to caring, supporting people and responding to those in need.

“Open all day for...drop in, prayer, those in need.”

As centres of activity they provide a focus for the community and help the integration of that community. Churches and other places of worship are seen as safe havens, and places to which people come for the significant rites of passage in their lives, eg weddings, funerals, baptisms. The presence of an active church is also claimed to signal to the community that they matter, that “they are worth being with”. This in itself can be important in deprived areas where many of the people suffer from low self-esteem.

“You start in an inner city area with a lot of people with low self esteem, because they are unemployed, in poverty, divorced, etc. The impact of the church in such a community is colossal ... giving unseen affirmation of the place and people’s worth.” (Anglican Vicar, Gloucester)

Churches can be seen as honest brokers, independent, not part of any political or statutory professional groups and, in this sense, they are perceived by local people as not having an agenda.

For example the All Saints House project in Plymouth¹¹ says that a prime reason why local people have listened to what they have said is because they have accepted their reputation for independence. In the local area they earned a place on the local Stonehouse Professional Forum that looks at health issues. Involvement on the Forum took a tremendous amount of effort, as the Forum did not necessarily see community development workers as having equivalent professional status to doctors and teachers. However, with continued persistence and without feeling they were necessarily representing a vested interest with something to lose, All Saints were able to gain a place on the Forum and eventual representation on the Community Health Council, and became involved in trying to get transparency from the local Health Authority around the issue of local waiting times. The All Saints project therefore feels that it is able to speak freely on behalf of local people and that they enjoy the support of the people whom they represent. This is reinforced by the project’s continued presence in the community, whereas other projects’ regeneration programmes are seen as parachuted in by external concerns.

¹¹ See the accompanying document ‘Daily Service: How Faith Groups contribute to Neighbourhood Regeneration and Renewal in the South West of England: Case Studies’ for more detail of this project

3.4 Faith Groups' Awareness of/Attitudes to Regeneration Projects

One of the striking lessons that we have learnt from this research is that many faith groups in the South West have remained isolated from the regeneration initiatives and opportunities that have developed over the last few decades, despite their long standing connections with, and commitment to, the communities they serve.

The research reported here specifically focused on faith groups in areas of neighbourhood renewal and other areas identified as suffering deprivation, where greater involvement with local developments could have been anticipated (given the amount of regeneration activity that is currently happening in these areas). However only 20% of the faith groups that we contacted reported that they were, or had been, involved in regeneration projects.

Faith groups are very concerned about the problems and issues that face the communities that they serve. They clearly feel that regeneration is about more than just refurbishing buildings and creating jobs, and that there needs to be a social and spiritual dimension to creating healthy communities.

"Regeneration is not just physical but environmental and social, and needs spiritual renewal as well"
(Anglican Vicar, Gloucester)

Individuals need to be engaged and stimulated to help drive things for the benefit of themselves and their local community: some questioned whether top down policies and funding could achieve this.

"...people/individuals are the key sources of energy ... regeneration is through the informal networks... don't see how officialdom can help" (Anglican Vicar, Gloucester)

A small minority of respondents were quite cynical about regeneration initiatives, believing that regeneration strategies in their area had largely failed precisely because they had failed to address the spiritual need of local people. In this sense they claimed that faith groups (and they were not talking simply about their own faith group) were needed to ensure that regeneration could be a success.

"Given all the money that has poured into this area from Europe and SRB and elsewhere I can honestly say that it does not appear to have made any difference whatsoever. We offer what other agencies can't offer: love. If you tell them that they don't like it but I know that we will be here long after all these funding streams have dried up. You see no amount of money is going to change people's hearts and that is what is needed on this community. Some of the new houses that have been built on the estate are beautiful, really beautiful but in some cases these have been wrecked even after a year with new tenants. You have to do more than just build buildings." (Evangelical Christian Leader, Bristol)

Although some of the areas targeted for this research in the South West have been in receipt of funding from a number of official programmes over recent years, others have only become eligible fairly recently. There was some evidence of faith groups reacting by beginning to come together to form partnerships and to get involved. For example, there were many examples of projects at fairly early stages of development, drafting funding applications or just getting project ideas underway in Penwith and Gloucester. In Gloucester City a Churches' Action Group is being established as an action group within the City Centre Community Partnership (ie the local LSP). It has conducted an audit of faith groups that has revealed a wide range of social and welfare-type activities already going on, and significant aspirations to do more.

In areas which have been in receipt of successive strands of SRB funding, there are examples of longer standing regeneration projects involving faith groups. In Bristol in particular the South Bristol Church and Community Trust¹² have a ten year history of winning funding bids. They are involved in the local LSP and are currently pulling together a partnership with the local council, the LSC and the PCT to develop new community buildings.

However, the survey responses from those who declared that they had never applied for official funding revealed not only a widespread lack of awareness of local regeneration developments, but arguably evidence of exclusion by funding and local strategic agencies. Half of the faith group respondents said that they had never heard of their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and 95% said that they had never been invited (or didn't know whether they had been invited) to join their LSP; a damning indictment of local attempts to promote inclusivity, and contrary to the directives of the Home Office.

"needs more publicity – don't know how to access" (Anglican Vicar, Cornwall)

Those who had heard of funding opportunities were more likely to apply for regeneration funding than not apply, but still a substantial number had not applied.

Only a third of the faith groups who responded to our postal survey said that they were receiving or had been awarded funds for regeneration projects but many of these were enthusiastic about the opportunities that this gave them, and were convinced of the value of their contribution.

The real and perceived barriers given as reasons why faith groups do not tap into these opportunities are explored further in Section 3.5 below.

¹² See the accompanying document 'Daily Service: How Faith Groups contribute to Neighbourhood Regeneration and Renewal in the South West of England: Case Studies' for more detail of this project

3.5 Barriers to Faith Groups' Involvement with Regeneration Projects

3.5.1 Responses in the Postal Survey

It became a central theme of the research reported here to investigate why so few faith groups were included in the local partnerships being established to drive forward neighbourhood renewal (NR) in these areas, and why so few had accessed the funding available under the NR and/or other streams of regeneration funding.

A questionnaire was sent to a sample of those faith groups who had said they had not applied for funding. This survey presented respondents with a range of statements¹³ that they might make to explain this and asked them to tick those that applied in their own case. On average 5 out of the 26 options were selected by each respondent. Table 2 below ranks the responses.

Table 2 Faith Groups' Reasons for not applying for funding

Reason for not applying funding	Selected by Faith groups %
Insufficient resources to launch a bid	55
Would not like to be evaluated	36
Too small	32
Didn't realise there were funding opportunities available	32
We believe we are not in a regeneration area	32
Do not have any partners to share the burden	32
We have found it difficult dealing with local bureaucracies	32
Regeneration activities are not in line with our mission	32
We are seen as not being politically correct	27
Do not have sufficient resources to be partners in a bid	27
We work with individuals rather than communities	27
We have been ignored by officials in the past	23
Negative media headlines make us reluctant to get involved	23
Religious groups are discriminated against by local officials	23
Regeneration initiatives are not addressing local needs	23
Do not want long term managerial responsibilities	23
We have been involved before and didn't like it	23
Do not accept the values of local regeneration officials	18
Do not believe the government is serious about involving faiths	18
The local council tends to ignore us	18
Do not accept equal opportunity policies	14
We are remote from local decision makers	14
We are meeting individual needs rather than community needs	14
The local community do not want us involved	14
Regeneration information received is difficult to understand	9
We cannot make day time meetings	0

¹³ The statements set out were compiled from the responses received in this research and found in other relevant studies.

The main reason why faith groups do not apply for funding is because they feel they do not have the resources to launch a bid (55%). Many also ticked explanations more explicitly related to their lack of capacity e.g. 'we do not have any partners to share the burden' (32%); 'we are too small' (32%). A lack of self-confidence might also account for the number that declared that they would not like any funded community work they undertook to be evaluated (36%).

From these responses it is clear that there are a number of barriers to faith groups' involvement in these programmes. Some of these barriers are real hurdles that are difficult to overcome but others are, perhaps, more perceived than real. The other questions in our survey provided further information on why faith groups found difficulty in getting involved in regeneration initiatives.

3.5.2 Lack of Resources and Capacity in Faith Groups

A large number of those groups that we contacted did express an interest in being involved in regeneration initiatives in their communities, but were worried about the implications for themselves. In a majority of cases there were serious concerns about a lack of capacity to cope with managing a project, while many found the whole process of making a bid for funding very demanding.

"most faith groups are quite small and dependent on volunteers, the process is weighted against such small groups...." (Salvation Army, Cornwall)

There was a widespread perception that the process of applying for regeneration funding and of running such projects was very bureaucratic, as shown by the percentage of responses that concerned institutional barriers: we have found it difficult dealing with local bureaucracies (32%); we have been ignored by officials in the past (23%).

"..... a bureaucratic mountain to climb..." (Methodist Minister, Cornwall)

3.5.3 Fear of a clash of values with regeneration officials and funding agencies

A further significant barrier to faith groups seeking to become part of regeneration partnerships, and to applying for funding, was the fear that funders would be antagonistic to the ethos and values of the faith group concerned.

"The official channels/funders have a strong resistance [to faith groups' involvement with funded projects] because of their fear of proselytising, they are frightened and don't know what we can bring...we need to change the culture there" (Anglican, Gloucester)

Over quarter of respondents in our sample survey declared that they didn't apply [for funding from local or national government sources] because they were perceived as not being 'politically correct' (27%). There was also concern about potential clashes of values e.g: we do not accept equal opportunity policies (14%) or we are meeting individual needs rather than community and social needs (14%).

Amongst our respondents there was a strongly held view that government and local authority officers are specifically hostile to the Christian churches.

"Christians explicitly feel excluded because they are Christian" (Anglican, Gloucester)

“Christians feel excluded .. yet they are much the most numerous in the population”... (Anglican, Gloucester)

“Official funding bodies seem not to expect church led projects to be successful – there is an image that the church is withering away” (Methodist Minister, Cornwall)

Many faith groups believe, and have been told by funding agencies, that faith groups are ineligible for regeneration funding. Others explicitly declare that they have had to agree not to proselytise if they want funding.

*“I can remember ***** sitting there, you know from ERDF, from the South West office, saying specifically that there must be no evangelical stuff at all and she was really concerned that it really was a secular project and that there should be no hint of anything Christian going on anywhere. So the message we got was that there was lots of money out there as long as you don’t belong to a faith.” (Project Manager, Plymouth)*

In fact a few (and we must stress a few) faith groups can cite incidences of when they felt discriminated against by regeneration officials and individuals working on local strategic partnerships who seemed to resist the participation of faith groups in their activities.

“There is a classic example of how local regeneration people see us. We had some information around inviting us to be part of a regeneration festival. I responded and said that we would like to be part of this community event. However we were taken out of the publicity for the day and the event was organised the other side of the college rather than this side so we were isolated from the main activity. When I asked why we had been omitted and pointed out that they were supposed to be about inclusion rather than exclusion they couldn’t tell me why”

Whether this faith group was discriminated against because of their faith is hard to prove but, what is very evident is their perception that they were not welcome. They will probably avoid future events with other community groups.

Many non Christian faith groups from the BME sector also feel discriminated against.

“the muslim communities feel everyone is against them” (Muslim Leader, Bristol)

This is partly because of recent world events and the negative repercussions that faith group members have had to endure in their own communities. Since 9/11 non-Christian BME faith groups report increased incidents of hostility and discrimination at work, in the street and the broader community. During our research one temple in one of our sample areas have had to endure gunshots and car fires on their premises; an action that might make the faith community more insular.

3.5.4 Fear that they would be seen as promoting religion

Many faith groups recognised that funders needed to be reassured that, if faith groups were involved in a project, they would not use it for religious purposes.

“one of the difficulties of applying for funding as a church led project is that we have to be absolutely sure that we are delivering services, not religion... is difficult to convince funders of this” (Methodist Minister, Cornwall)

“some churches find this a barrier if [they] have to change their way of working” (Methodist Minister, Gloucester)

Those who have won funding very clearly realise that they cannot proselytise even if they wanted too. Without exception faith groups who had applied and won funding had done so in order to serve and improve things for people living in their local community. They were very conscious of ensuring that they should appear faith neutral in their community activities and went out of their way to persuade us that they do not proselytise.

"we have had to spend a lot of time convincing people that we are here to serve the community on the community's agenda". (South Bristol Community Church Trust)

We did not detect any ulterior motive or strategy to boost faith group membership through engagement with funding streams by faith groups. On the contrary, faith groups who had made funding applications had endured great hardships in participating, and had spent many years developing effective partnerships and the necessary capacity to ensure they were successful. It is clearly not an easy route for faith groups to take, and the added demand that they avoid advocating the core beliefs that have sustained them in their work with local people demonstrates the tremendous commitment that many are showing to deliver improved services to and support for local people.

Many realise they can only be effective in winning bids if they develop partnerships with non faith groups in order to comply with perceived funder demands for non-faith involvement in regeneration.

"In order to get funds we realised we needed to broaden our approach that's why we pulled community members on board and now it is the community leading this more than us." (Faith Leader, Plymouth)

3.5.5 Lack of Interest in being involved

A significant number of the groups we contacted were not really interested in participating in regeneration initiatives. Some sounded sceptical and uninterested in the possibilities. Others found that their mainly elderly members could not support such involvement: "...[there is] ...a sense of exhaustion ... too tired"

"...many churches are very inward looking.... Many have the attitude that regeneration is nothing to do with us" (Methodist Minister, Gloucester)

Some Christian churches in inner city areas are 'gathered churches', which means that their congregations come from a wider area eg URC in Gloucester. For historic reasons their places of worship may be in inner city areas but, if their members come from elsewhere, they tend not to be as committed to (or as understanding of) the problems of the area within which the church is located as other faith groups whose members are drawn from the local community.

There is also a category of faith groups that see their mission as purely catering to the spiritual needs of their members and which are mainly interested in the wider community as a target for drawing more people into their faith. One evangelical church withdrew from the Penzance & Newlyn Breakfast project for the homeless¹⁴ because they could not accept the ethos of the project that there should be no explicit proselytising. In fact evangelical Christian groups were the most likely to eschew involvement. We have already reported on one group that views the lack of spiritual engagement in regeneration as a major failing of all regeneration schemes and a reason for their non engagement, but these attitudes are also compounded by a sense that they are not necessarily liked or accepted by regeneration professionals

¹⁴ See the accompanying document 'Daily Service: How Faith Groups contribute to Neighbourhood Regeneration and Renewal in the South West of England: Case Studies' for more detail of this project

3.5.6 Responses analysed by faith group

An analysis of the responses from different faith groups found no significant variation with the type of membership (i.e. elderly or family oriented) or length time the faith group had spent in the community in the reasons for non-participation. However the type of faith did appear to make a difference in terms of the explanations offered for non-participation in regeneration initiatives.

Table 3 below shows where more than half the respondents in that faith group have selected a particular statement as applying to their faith group¹⁵.

As expected, the majority in all faith groups believe they have insufficient resources to launch an effective application. Beyond this the results indicate that Roman Catholic, Methodists and Evangelical respondents have some strong feelings about why they decide not to apply.

Roman Catholic responses indicate that they feel isolated in the communities in which they reside. They believe they are ignored and even discriminated against, by local officials and they declare that they have no partners in the community to work with. These quantitative indicators were also supported by comments given to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

“The people with the funds should remember that Catholics pay taxes as well” (Priest)

Methodist respondents believed that their groups were too small but they were also more likely to be critical of the values held by regeneration workers. It is noticeable that we report on two case studies where Methodists have been among the leaders in establishing partnerships for funding applications. One of the main reasons for adopting such an approach was because their diminishing membership base made it increasingly difficult to work on their own.

On the other hand Evangelical Christians expressed strong views about why they did not seek to participate in regeneration initiatives; negative headlines about their faith group made them reluctant to get involved and they are more likely to believe that regeneration is not part of their mission, and to be critical of local regeneration initiatives because they perceive them as lacking an underpinning of spiritual values.

¹⁵ If the responses had been evenly spread across the groups, each statement should have received a score of 20%, therefore a score of 50% or more indicates strong feeling in that particular faith group.

Table 3 Reasons given for non-participation in funded regeneration initiatives by type of faith

Faith Group	Statements that were selected by 50% or more of the faith group sampled
Church of England	Insufficient resources
Roman Catholic	Insufficient resources No partners to work with Ignored by local officials Our faith group is discriminated against by local officials Individual spiritual welfare than material/social needs
Methodists	Insufficient resources We are too small Do not accept the values of regeneration workers
Evangelical Christians	Insufficient resources We are too small Negative headlines about us make us reluctant to get involved Existing regeneration activities are not meeting local needs Local council ignores us Regeneration is not part of our mission

3.5.7 Black and Minority Ethnic Sector and involvement with regeneration initiatives

Our research reveals that there are important issues to consider in relation to the potential engagement of faith groups from the BME sector with local regeneration initiatives. It proved very difficult to contact these groups, both Black-led Christian groups and non-Christian faith groups.

Many of the BME Christian faith groups undertake a lot of outreach work in their local community; there are examples of quite outstanding acts of charitable work with some of the most excluded people in the community e.g. ex-prisoners, drug-takers and homeless people, demonstrating once again that faith groups are often the final agency to reach the needy when other agencies have failed. But many of these groups are quite small and currently lack sufficient capacity and knowledge to be engaged in large regeneration projects, although most declare that they are willing to listen to potential opportunities.

However, in one of the region's cities with a BME population proportionately above the national average, there is an emerging recognition within all local faith communities that BME groups have hitherto been marginal to existing regeneration processes and funding. At a recent multi-faith conference part of the reason for their failure to engage was placed directly with funding agencies and agencies of local governance. Speaking at the conference, Dabinderjit Singh from the National Audit Office suggested that the local City Council and GOSW did not even know how many BME faith followers there were in their community, and that they had failed to develop sufficient tracking systems to monitor the community needs and development of these faith groups. Census figures for 2001 suggested that there were merely 1,500 Sikhs living in the city, but he asserted that 5,000 Sikhs attended the city's four Gurdwaras every week.

Clearly having inaccurate underestimations of faith groups' size and distribution is a problem for community planning. However these underestimations reflect very potent explanations as to why non-Christian faith groups may appear reluctant to proclaim themselves and engage. Our research suggests there has been increased fear and trepidation amongst non-Christian faith groups post 9/11. One interviewee from the Muslim community who is engaged with community development spoke of "an increasing paranoia" amongst that faith's members.

"You have had 547 arrests under the anti-terrorist laws and you have had that done in the blaze of publicity. You have had the cameras there and everyone is there. What they don't tell you however is of those 547 only 66 were ever charged. Of those 66, only 9 were ever convicted and most of them were convicted on immigration offences not terrorism. Now we all have something in our cupboard whether it is a parking ticket but it is only a misdemeanour. Only one of them was actually convicted about supposed terrorism activities. One! Out of 547. For the Muslim community it just creates paranoia. The cops don't need evidence to enter your house. It is just suspicion. Someone has an argument with a Muslim at work the next day he calls the cops." (Muslim, South West city)

During the fieldwork stage of this research we found access to these non Christian faith groups was best achieved through umbrella organizations. Although often under-resourced, these seek to promote their faith group's activities and cultures, and to support their faith members with broader problems and issues like housing, legal advice, employment etc. However there is sometimes a sense that these faith groups themselves are failing to engage because they do not recognise that there are social welfare issues outside in the wider community that need addressing.

*"If you say that you have a problem with like drugs in the community and the ***** [place of worship] say no we haven't, our kids are fine, hunky dory, and this is the attitude. They actually believe there are no problems with the youth in our society because they are out of touch. They know their friends and their sons and their daughters but they don't know what they are doing outside." (Muslim, South West city)*

This isolationism has been perceived as a direct result of leadership failure amongst more active community members from the non-Christian faith community itself. Leaders are sometimes first generation immigrants, who are less familiar with the issues and problems that second generation and third generation faith members endure.

Umbrella organizations are undertaking a difficult task in serving these communities and enabling their faith members to participate in society. However, even though they are articulating their own community's needs, this may not be strictly in line with the long term official overall strategic approach being planned for multi-ethnic communities. One of the professional project managers in such an organisation reported that they are campaigning for a faith school to be developed in their local city, but planning for single faith solutions to youth transition journeys to adulthood is probably not part of any given local strategic plan for the local community.

This kind of issue could also cause division amongst some existing community projects in the area, who already feel that some of the existing faith centred community projects (which have received public money) are insufficiently secular to be true representatives for their community in the local area. We came across some resentment from service deliverers in the wider voluntary and community sector that faith-based groups with insular perspectives were being awarded funding at the expense of more secular and self proclaimed multi-cultural groups that work to attract all to mainstream, non-religious activities. Some are even calling for greater secularism in funding programmes to avoid strengthening isolationism in single faith communities.

"Religion actually promotes that you stick within religion anyway so I don't understand where it is all coming from. The funders are encouraging them to draw these boundaries" (VCS Project Worker, South West city)

In this research our remit is not to verify whether these claims are true or not, rather it is to report on the perceptions informing potential partnership relationships in the community. Clearly there is some concern that certain faith based groups working in the community are actively seeking to promote faith rather than community engagement and, in this sense, there is a perception that some of these faith groups are perhaps working in an exclusionary way which could be inimical to allowing their younger faith members to experience life in the mainstream:

“I basically think that there is a feeling there, don’t empower Asian kids.” (VCS Project Manager, South West city)

3.6 What can be done to increase Faith Groups’ Participation in Regeneration Initiatives?

As can be seen from the results and insights discussed in 3.5 above, there are a complex set of barriers to faith groups’ potential involvement in regeneration initiatives, and to encouraging them to bid for funding, yet the results given in sections 3.1 and 3.2 have clearly shown the wide range of social and community welfare work being carried out by faith groups and their members in the wider community.

Faith groups have extensive knowledge of those local communities and, in many cases, a wide range of contacts within them. It seems probable that regeneration initiatives might better reach the people in the deprived communities that they target if they could draw on the resources, skills and contacts of faith communities. Therefore it becomes important to find ways of overcoming the barriers to faith groups’ involvement with these initiatives. A number of potentially useful ways of promoting closer involvement of faith groups in regeneration initiatives have emerged in the course of our research.

3.6.1 The provision of better information

This is clearly important: lack of information about what is going on and the opportunities that could be available are a major barrier.

The responses to our questionnaire showed that half of those faith groups had not heard of any funding opportunities to which they might apply. Those who had heard of funding opportunities were more likely to apply for regeneration funding than not apply. For example the response from a very proactive church minister when asked why his church had not applied for official funding was : “... probably ignorance...”

Those managing the official regeneration initiatives and funding streams could also work more proactively to engage with local faith groups and overcome the perception of many that their participation would not be welcome. The experience of our respondents was very varied in terms of how they viewed the public bodies with which they had had contact in this context. In several cases they reported that e.g. local regeneration officers had been very helpful, where as in other places the experience was much more difficult.

“ ...we need a level playing field...”

There should be clear instructions to officers working within communities that faith groups are welcome to be involved in regeneration projects and funding applications. Clear advice should also go to LSP's that faith groups should be welcome partners in community initiatives. There should be no barriers to their participation, except for the exclusion of explicit prosletysation.

3.6.2 More courage within faith groups in making applications

It is also very important that faith groups make an effort themselves to engage with those administering regeneration initiatives in their area.

The fact that so few of those we contacted had applied for official funding suggested that many faith groups have already decided that they would be unsuccessful or ineligible for regeneration funding, and have consequently avoided the strain of getting involved.

It should also be remembered that the largest single reason cited by respondents to our survey for why they did not seek to get involved with regeneration initiatives or to apply for funding was their own perceived lack of resources. Faith leaders need to work to overcome this.

"....not to be afraid of running things ourselves" (Methodist Minister, Cornwall)

It is certainly true that many faith groups lack capacity because they are small and that their ministers and other leaders face many conflicting demands on their time. The difficulty we had in making contact with so many of them reflects that. But those who can see the benefits of regeneration initiatives and who would like to become involved need to be proactive in seeking a way forward.

"church groups need to ...say we are here and want to help" (Methodist Minister, Cornwall)

Often the best way forward has been to work in partnership with other faith groups in the area, even if this means making some compromises in terms of their preferred ways of working.

"Very difficult for ... church to know how to engage, have to work with other churches if going to take initiatives" (URC Minister, Gloucester)

"Going into partnership means [you] have to bend and adapt" (Methodist Minister, Gloucester)

Faith leaders and their members should also recognise that those delivering the regeneration programmes are themselves constrained in how they work; there needs to be an improvement in levels of understanding on both sides. There is a message to faith groups in this.

"be aware that these people have constraints that they have to work within" (Anglican Vicar, Gloucester)

3.6.3 Improving the application process

Those we contacted, and the respondents to our survey were, almost unanimous in pleading for the application process to be made less onerous. "Difficult and time consuming" was the comment of many when asked about it.

"if the government wants to get faith groups involved will have to make it a lot easier" (Methodist Minister, Cornwall)

A Vicar's tale: seeking funding for a Church Hall refurbishment

A vicar was told that he could apply to the 'Futurebuilding Fund'.

On enquiring he was given details of lots of websites from which he downloaded lots of information – BUT it would need half a day to read it all.

The guidelines say they would need to appoint a fund manager but do not tell him how to get the £100,000 he needs.

BUT he does not have a suitable volunteer in his congregation and cannot afford to pay a fund raiser.

"It is very daunting and far too time-consuming – I have funerals to take!"

The very lack of capacity within faith groups, and the need of their leaders to respond to sometimes urgent demands on their time from people in crisis, makes it particularly difficult for them to handle the preparation of business plans in the format required by potential funders, and the completion of the application forms. It seemed that where there have been successful applications these had often been prepared by faith group members who had the appropriate expertise or, occasionally, by employing professionals to finalise the forms etc. Clearly few faith groups have this type of help readily available.

It was suggested more than once that what was really needed was for someone from the funding body to come and help with the process, or even that there could be secondments to manage large scale applications and projects.

"It almost needs someone to come and help us – find out our needs, tell us what we can claim, help with the form and get us the money" (Anglican Gloucester)

More than one respondent also commented unfavourably on the frequency with which there were changes in the details of regeneration funding streams, or even the programmes themselves. Small faith groups often take some time to get their act together, to find potential matched funding and to write out their proposals. It is very discouraging if they then find that the conditions of the funding or the objectives of the scheme have changed.

"Stop moving the goal-posts... a local body takes 12 months or more to prepare an application ... grant-making bodies change focus quite frequently"

However the obstacles are clearly not insuperable and experiences can differ, as shown by the range of examples of the involvement of faith-led groups in regeneration projects that we identified across our target areas. A church hall extension in Cornwall successfully applied for Millennium funding – the project was led by the church wardens who found the forms OK and the Millennium Commission very helpful: *"the process was not that difficult.....faith groups could probably access more [funds] if they tried"* (Anglican Cornwall).

3.6.4 Recipes for success...

In spite of the apparent difficulties, this research identified several examples where faith groups had successfully applied for funding and become involved in local regeneration initiatives in their areas. There are a number of common features in these examples, which are also found in the case studies of 'best practice' completed as part of this research¹⁶, and which provide lessons for faith groups wishing to follow the same route and for those seeking to encourage and help them to do so.

Key Individuals...

The presence of a particular individual is often the key to success. Often these are people who already have some specialised knowledge or who already have extensive contacts with the local authorities, funding agencies and other relevant bodies in their area. Often they were people who were just particularly determined to tackle a perceived need and who make it their business to find out where resources can be found.

Examples included a minister who had previously worked in social work and education, while another had been a land use planner. Such people understand better how the system works. Elsewhere there were one or more faith group members with relevant professional skills who were able to assist.

It was clear from the evidence we obtained that very few faith group members are directly involved in writing and developing funding applications. Faith leaders see it as very much down to them to move events forward but it can prove useful to identify and encourage members with relevant skills to assist with funding applications.

Funded workers...

An early ability to win funds to support a community development worker to work alongside the faith group to broaden their ideas and follow opportunities to deepen the faith group's involvement with the community was very helpful for the South Bristol Community Church Trust:

"without all his efforts and support and that pot of money at the beginning to support his work we wouldn't be where we are today" (Project Manager, Bristol)

Working in Partnership...

Where faith groups are included in partnerships with local authorities and other stakeholders they can often make a useful contribution to the success of that partnership but also learn more about ways of accessing funding streams for relevant projects of their own.

"....partnership is the way forward..." (Anglican Vicar, Cornwall)

For example a local Anglican vicar is on the Harbour Community Board which is working for the regeneration of Hayle: "... they seem to regard our involvement as important" . Here is another example of an energetic individual who is clearly a very good networker and very proactive.

¹⁶presented 'Daily Service: How Faith Groups contribute to Neighbourhood Regeneration and Renewal in the South West of England: Case Studies' published alongside this report.

Need for clarity on spatial boundaries...

Often the boundaries of the areas eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal funding and other regeneration programmes have not coincided with other more familiar boundaries. This can lead to a lack of clarity about just which places are eligible, and just which faith groups would be welcomed as part of the process. But where boundaries are clear lines of responsibility can be drawn.

"In Hartcliffe & Withywood easy because had defined boundaries for the estate so they knew where they could get involved" (Methodist Minister, Gloucester)

There also needs to be some scope to allow faith groups who serve a community but who are geographically outside a designated funded area to be considered for inclusion in funding opportunities.

Success in funding applications often follows a first award...

Growing confidence and experience can follow from a successful application. The role of linking into the funding streams appears to be heavily reliant on faith leaders but the lack of capacity within many faith groups (identified as a barrier to involvement in regeneration programmes) could be addressed through small grants to help the preparation of funding applications. Early success often leads to further success.

In the case of many BME faith groups, funding applications emerge from umbrella organisations and not from places of worship.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Our research has found that very many faith groups in the South West of England are extensively involved in social welfare activities in their wider communities.

Much of this faith group activity is informal and reactive to a perceived need, or results from recognition that there are people whom other agencies have failed to reach, but many faith groups also run group activities open to people from the wider community such as youth clubs, luncheon clubs for the elderly, after-school activities, mother & toddler groups and so on. These are activities which can promote social cohesion and which provide an opportunity for the individuals involved to up-grade their organisational and social skills.

Faith groups bring significant resources to support their social welfare activities, namely their buildings and people. They have often been committed to, and embedded in, their community for many years. There is growing recognition of the importance of the sort of networks and community 'know how' that faith groups possess, often almost uniquely in their communities. Their existence is an important part of what is being discussed as 'social capital'¹⁷.

Their buildings have huge potential as community centres and spaces in which to host projects. We found many examples of this happening, but the costs of up-keep and of meeting planning requirements mean that there can be no great expansion of activity without external support. Indeed, with ageing memberships, the sustainability of even present levels of activity may be problematic.

In addition, individual members of many faith groups give their time freely in support of social welfare activities. This army of volunteers is one of the most important resources that faith groups bring as a contribution to their communities and enables them to deliver services very cost-effectively, although there are sometimes issues around training and ensuring quality.

Overall then, there is evidence that these characteristics of faith communities mean that they can be very effective in delivering services of real and lasting benefit to their wider communities. The eight case studies presented with the results of this report illustrate this by analysing a wide variety of projects which are achieving beneficial outcomes from different types of activity and different funding streams.

However, relatively few faith groups get engaged in regeneration projects. Relatively few are successful in accessing official funding for these activities even if they apply, although they can be a very effective conduit through which to facilitate neighbourhood renewal if they become involved in the process.

The research reported here found that there were a number of barriers to faith groups' participation in regeneration programmes. Many faith groups are very small and tend not to have the capacity to work at the scale expected by regeneration funders. They were often deterred by perceived bureaucratic hurdles and an expectation that they would not be welcomed as partners.

The provision of clearer information on the opportunities available and simplifying the application process are two actions that could help to reduce these barriers to faith groups' participation in neighbourhood renewal initiatives, but faith groups themselves also need to have the courage to get involved. The evidence collected during this research confirms that they have a potentially very valuable contribution to make to efforts to regenerate their communities, particularly by building on what they are already doing.

¹⁷ See the report by Morris et al 2003, 'Faith in Action: A Report on Faith Communities and Social Capital in the East of England' for a useful discussion of social capital in this context

Inevitably there is not always agreement within faith groups about the desirability of getting involved in 'official' projects. There needs to be frank discussion with the members about why they might want to get involved in such projects, and how they might widen the involvement of members in delivering the services and support they already provide. Many faith groups rely on the commitment of a few and this can lead to over-dependency and vulnerability.

On the other hand, the presence of key individuals within faith groups (usually the faith leader) seems to be one of the most important factors in stimulating successful engagement with regeneration projects. Individuals with enthusiasm, networking skills and, often, some specialist knowledge can make things happen.

In order to improve clarity and understanding all local governance structures, from GOSW to Parish Councils and LSPs, need to develop a consistent and clear strategic policy on just how, and to what extent, faith groups either can or should be involved in local regeneration initiatives across the community. In particular, funding agencies need to make clear the extent to which they can award funds to support activities organised by faith based groups so that the latter do not feel there are institutional exclusionary practices endemic in local governance and community structures.

The funders also need to explain these decisions about funding to the wider community so that secular, inter-faith based, and/or multi-ethnic projects are not left feeling that agendas have shifted. This will be a difficult balance to achieve but one that is necessary to ensure progression with mutual tolerance, trust and respect. There is a real danger that uncertainty, lack of clarity and perceived inconsistency could encourage distrust and disharmony to develop between existing service deliverers in the community and faith groups potentially seeking engagement with the community.

All faith groups surveyed for this research would welcome more information on regeneration and other funding streams to which they may apply. Many faith groups think that they are not entitled to apply for funding opportunities, and some of those who have applied feel they have been discriminated against because of their faith. Clarity will reduce the sense of discrimination that currently exists.

Marketing departments and regeneration agencies also need to ensure that they are aware of all the faith groups in their areas, and to seek to develop appropriate ways of disseminating information to them. Our research shows that mail shots do not work; therefore time and effort need to be devoted to developing appropriate avenues and methods of contacting faith groups. This is particularly important if local governance and funding agencies are serious about including non-Christian faiths from the Black and Minority Ethnic sector in their initiatives. In this sector there are very difficult issues to address in terms of increasing their involvement in regeneration initiatives. In recent years the ethnic minority groups have felt increasingly isolated, and that they face problems of community hostility.

Regeneration agencies also need to think imaginatively on how they can best work with different faith groups, recognising that lack of capacity may severely constrain the extent to which the latter can respond. Although conferences and forcing partnerships to achieve policy goals may work, it is also important to consider and respond to the ideas that faith groups undoubtedly already hold about appropriate initiatives in their neighbourhoods.

If a faith group seeks to be involved in regeneration activities, its capacity to generate further activity and funding needs to be assessed. It has been suggested that support should be given to build capacity within faith groups¹⁸, but it is also important to remember that such support needs to be on-going; it cannot be seen as a one off grant since, over time, individuals inevitably leave or move on¹⁹.

Faith groups should not be seen as just part of the Voluntary and Community sector but should be invited to work with LSPs and other partnerships in their own right. They bring certain unique attributes to their local communities, and are well embedded within those communities. However faith groups do not always speak with the same voice, nor do they always find it easy to work together or to agree on who should be 'the faith community' representative on a partnership board²⁰. There needs to be flexibility and a willingness to work together from both sides if the partnership is to flourish.

Finally, we should like to present a number of recommendations for consideration by those keen to increase the involvement of faith groups in community orientated regeneration projects and similar initiatives. These are directed at both national and local authority officers and the members of faith groups themselves.

Recommendations resulting from this research

Government Office South West (GOSW), Local Authorities and Faith Groups:

- should seek to build on what faith groups are doing already; activities which often reflect the deep knowledge of their local communities that has developed over many years.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), through the Inner Cities Religious Council, and GOSW:

- should set out clearer guidelines on the eligibility of faith groups to access regeneration funding;
- should ensure that these guidelines are immediately distributed to all Local Authorities for onward disseminations to LSPs and other relevant partnerships.

GOSW, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Authorities:

- should seek to find innovative ways of making contact with, and disseminating information to, faith communities;
- should ensure that there are more discussions between funders, officers and faith leaders on the latter's perceptions of the needs of their communities and what could be done to address them;
- should ensure better information reaches funding agencies and officers about the size and distribution of the different faith communities, and their needs, particularly in areas of multiple deprivation;

¹⁸ see Musgrave et al 1999, p14; there has also been funding available from Community Empowerment funds to support community groups' involvement with LSPs (DETR 2002 Annex D); this is now being rolled into the Single Community Programme (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2004)

¹⁹ see Finneron D & Dinham A 2002 pp56/57

²⁰ see discussion in HMSO (2004) para 8.41 on the difficulties of agreeing representation from the VCS sector on partnerships such as LSPs

- should check that community based faith groups actually receive information on the funding programmes and availability of grants, (umbrella organizations do not always cascade information to all those who are eligible);
- should seek to assess the lack of capacity that often deters faith groups from making funding applications or seeking partnership in regeneration initiatives, and find ways to help increase that capacity;
- should work to find ways of helping with the refurbishment, repair and maintenance of buildings owned by faith groups so that they can be better used by the wider community;
- should under-take more research to examine the relationship between faith groups and other community projects, particularly in areas where the black and ethnic minority populations are above the national average.
- should ensure that all LSPs, other agencies and officers are told that faith groups are eligible to participate in their structures, and that they should actively seek to involve and work with their local faith groups;
- should seek to identify and support individuals from faith groups who could become key leaders in bigger regeneration projects and similar initiatives;
- should provide training and mentoring support in the application process and in managing projects, (ideally, a designated officer should be available to provide practical knowledge and support for all types of funding applications from faith groups);
- should try to provide a targeted, small grant programme available to faith groups to help kick start their involvement in neighbourhood renewal programmes.

Faith Groups:

- should fully and frankly discuss with their own members whether they wish to be involved in social and community welfare activities in the context of regeneration programmes, and the potential costs and benefits of so doing;
- should actively seek engagement with neighbourhood renewal programmes and activities through LSPs and other organisations;
- need to be willing to be work in partnership with other faith groups, voluntary and community sector groups and official agencies;
- need to recognise the constraints and limitations within which national and local government organisations and regeneration agencies have to work.

Appendix 1 - Statistical Information

Table A - Daily Service: Mapping the Faith Communities in Selected Areas

	Bristol Hartcliffe & Wityw.	Bristol Lawr.Hill & Easton	Gloucester Barton & Westgate	Plymouth St Peter's & Sutton	Cornwall Penwith*	Ilfracombe Central, East&West	Totals	as share of those contacted
Contacts								
No on List	9	15	26	17	60	11	138	
Contacted	9	10	11	11	23	5	69	
same minister	0	0	6	0	32	3	41	
Faiths								
C of E	4	1	3	6	12	2	28	41
same minister		5		10	1			
Methodist	2	0	3	2	5	1	13	19
(others same minister)		1		20	1			
RC	1	1		1	1	1	5	7
same minister				2	1			
URC			1	1			2	3
Baptist		1	1		1		3	4
Evangelical		1	2				3	4
Free Churches								0
Salvation Army	1				2	1	4	6
Other Christian	1	2	1	1	1		6	9
Jewish		1					1	1
Islam		1					1	1
Hindu		1					1	1
Buddhist					1		1	1
Other Asian		1					1	1
Contact Failed								
C of E			3		2	1		
same minister								
Methodist				1				
same minister								
RC				2				
same minister								
URC								
Baptist								
Evangelical			3		1			
Free Churches								
Salvation Army					1			
Other Christian				1		2		
Jewish								
Islam		5	2	1				
Hindu			1	1				
Buddhist					1			
Involved in Regeneration Projects	3	3	2	0	5	1	14	20

Table B - Faith Groups involved in social / community welfare activities

	Bristol Hartcliffe & Withyw.	Bristol Lawr.Hill & Easton	Gloucester Barton & Westgate	Plymouth St Peter's & Sutton	Cornwall Penwith*	Ilfracombe Central, East&West	All Groups
Activities	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Percentage working with							
Young People	89	70	36	82	26	40	52
Children/Toddlers	78	60	36	73	30	40	49
older people	100	70	36	73	30	40	54
other community	78	50	36	64	17	40	42
art group	0	0	9	9	9	0	6
coffee mornings	56	10	0	0	4	0	10
other groups using space	22	20	30	36	26	40	23
Groups Involved in Regeneration Projects	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	33	30	18	0	22	20	20

Table C - Resident Population by ethnic origin and religion in Target Areas, 2001

	Bristol Hartcliffe & Withyw.	Bristol Lawr.Hill	Bristol Easton	Gloucester Barton	Gloucester Westgate	Plymouth St Peter's	Plymouth Sutton	Cornwall Penwith*	Ilfracombe Central, East&West
Ethnic Origin	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
White	97.7	68.3	75.1	70.2	89.7	96.8	97.8	98.9	99.3
of which White Irish	0.7				2.0		0.8		
Mixed	1.3	5.8	4.3	4.2	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.1
Asian / Asian British	0.5	10.1	10.5	17.9	4.7	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.4
Indian	0.2	3.0	2.7	13.7	2.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0
Pakistani	0.2	4.7	5.5	1.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Bangladeshi	0.0	2.0	1.5	1.5	2.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0
Other Asian	0.0	0.5	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
Black / Black British	0.4	14.7	9.1	7.1	3.4	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1
Caribbean	0.2	8.6	7.0	5.9	2.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
African	0.1	4.3	1.0	0.6	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.1
Other Black	0.0	1.8	1.1	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Chinese / other	0.1	1.2	1.0	0.6	0.9	1.3	0.7	0.2	0.1
Religious Belief	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Christian	68.6	50.1	48.4	55.6	64.9	64.6	65.5	72.3	70.8
Buddhist	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.1
Hindu	0	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.1
Jewish	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2
Muslim	0.4	10.5	8.4	17.6	2.4	1	0.7	0.2	0.1
Sikh	0.2	1.6	2	0.1	0.1	0	0	0	0
Other	0.2	0.7	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.4
No religion	22.9	23.9	29	16.2	16.3	22.8	24.3	18.2	20
Religion not stated	7.6	11.6	10	9.2	14.9	9.1	8.4	8.2	8.4

Source: Census of Population 2001, ONS

Appendix 2

Members of the Steering Group which has guided the progress of this research project:

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Appendix 3 - Objectives of the Research Project

- 1 To assess the extent to which faith communities engage in activities that contribute to the economic and social regeneration of the wider communities within which they sit,
- 2 To identify the barriers to faith communities participation in funding opportunities for contributions to economic and social regeneration,
- 3 To evaluate the effectiveness of a representative sample of those activities within urban areas currently targeted for regeneration initiatives in the South West, (ie the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas in Bristol, Plymouth, Penwith, Kerrier, Gloucester and Bournemouth) and within selected peripheral rural areas in the region,
- 4 To equip policy-makers, regeneration and renewal professionals, public servants, practitioners and partnerships with the knowledge needed to enable them to make best use of the work that faith communities do best in tackling deprivation,
- 5 To disseminate the results of the project (including examples of what works best in neighbourhood renewal) to those engaged in the shaping and delivery of regeneration policy in the South West and to the faith communities themselves.

Appendix 4 - The Potential Role of Faith Groups in Regeneration

A commitment to engage faith groups in regeneration has been part of government policy for some time. On entering government in 1997, New Labour reviewed the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC) and confirmed its role as a consultative group in the Dept. of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). Revised guidance was issued to local authorities and regeneration partnerships to encourage the involvement of local communities, including faith groups, in urban regeneration work (DETR, 1997) and was followed by a Policy Action Team report on Community Self Help which highlighted the important, untapped resource that faith groups were in local communities: *"In many cases faith groups, of all denominations, will be the strongest around and yet their potential may be overlooked by funders and others engaged in programmes of community development."* (Home Office, 1999, p21.)

Similarly the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan, published in 2001, recognised that faith groups could provide *"...a channel to some of the hardest to reach groups"* in local communities (Social Exclusion Unit 2001 para 53.1). The government has also included faith groups in a list of organisations from whom members of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) could be drawn (ibid para 5.10). In this context, the government's guidance to LSPs stated that faith communities are part of a traditionally under-represented constituency but stressed that LSPs should *"... seek to work with and consult local people, including faith, black and minority communities"* (DETR 2001 p6 and p8).

This growing official recognition of the potentially valuable role of faith communities in regeneration and neighbourhood renewal has occurred in parallel with increasing evidence of the valuable role played by faith groups in their wider communities from a number of studies carried out in different parts of Britain. For example, a report from the Shaftesbury Society confirmed that the resources of faith communities in the United Kingdom are significant, and that their mission statements reflect a concern for their local community (Shaftesbury Society, 2001) while a report of a workshop programme run by the New Economics Foundation and the Church Urban Fund gives useful insights into the role of faith groups in neighbourhood renewal (Lewis J with Randolph-Horn E 2001). An extensive research programme in London (London Churches' Group for Social Action and Greater London Enterprise 2002a, 2002b) demonstrated that faith communities fund and run a large number of projects *"...often aimed at the most vulnerable members of society ... who may not receive support from other sources"*. This research also found that faith groups were keen to be involved in neighbourhood renewal initiatives. In 2002 a faith-based regeneration network was launched by the faith communities themselves in the UK, bringing nine faiths together with the aim to *"link regeneration practitioners who identify with faith traditions or who work for faith community organisations, so that they can share expertise and knowledge, and also speak to government on regeneration and community development issues"*²¹. Research undertaken by Farnell et al (2003) in cities in Yorkshire, the Midlands and in London suggested that many faith communities and their individual members already make a positive and significant contribution to regeneration work; they are identified as having a strong commitment to social care²².

At the local level too, the potential contribution of faith communities to regeneration and neighbourhood renewal has become an increasing focus of attention for local authorities. In 2002 the Local Government Association (LGA) issued 'Faith and Community' as a good practice guide for local authorities aiming to support

²¹ FBRN Conference Report 2002

²² See also Musgrave P et al 1999 on engaging church communities in the New Deal for Communities, Finneson D & Dinham A 2002 on faith buildings in neighbourhood renewal, Churches Together in Dorset 2002, The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber Ltd 2002, Morris Z et al 2003 on Faith Communities and social capital in the East of England.

faith communities in initiatives such as regeneration and social inclusion, and participation in Local Compacts (LGA 2002). Where faith communities are invited to join LSPs and other partnerships, this gives them a greater say in the policies that shape their communities, and a greater opportunity to get involved in the delivery of neighbourhood renewal initiatives on the ground (Klaushofer, 2003).

While many involved in the delivery of neighbourhood renewal programmes welcome the inclusion of faith groups in local initiatives, the wider policy environment is also changing in ways that will promote inclusion and prohibit discrimination. The European Convention on Human Rights prohibits discrimination on religious grounds and has implications for the policy and practice of public authorities in relation to religious identity (LGA, 2002). The EU Article 13 Race and Employment Directive, and the likely inclusion of Faith and Religion in the proposed new single equality body in the UK, will also impose obligations and constraints on national and local government initiatives

Just this year the government has published a report entitled *'Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities'*, which makes many recommendations about improving the mechanisms for consultation with the faith communities (Home Office Faith Communities Unit 2004). This also mentions that a Faith Communities Unit has been established within the Home Office which *"will lead on faith issues across Whitehall"* (ibid para 6.3.15) and an inter-departmental committee which has the *"aim of mainstreaming faith issues"* (ibid para 6.3.16).

In spite of all these initiatives, the level of participation of faith groups in neighbourhood renewal programmes remains very variable. A recent review of Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies concluded that many of these documents provide little evidence of measures to involve hard-to-reach groups, such as faith groups, although it also recognises that there can only be limited representation of the wider voluntary and community sector on the LSP boards, and that lack of collaboration and trust between the individual organisations can make this difficult to achieve (HMSO 2004 para 8.41).

There remains work to be done to get a clearer picture of the extent and variety of faith communities' activities, the barriers to their participation in regeneration programmes and ways to increase that participation to the benefit of their local communities.

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Appendix 6 - Questionnaire used in Postal Survey

Questionnaire for Church Groups who had received funding

1 Please tell us the name of your Church.

2 Please tell us your position in the Church.

3 How long has your church served the local community?

4 How long have you been working for your Church?

5 Which community does your faith group serve? (Please describe the geographical boundaries).

6 Kindly describe the types of people who come regularly to your main services (e.g. elderly, young families a mixture etc.)

7 What is your church's mission in your local community?

8 Does your church host on a regular basis any community groups who are not necessarily directly connected with your church (e.g. the Scouts, Conservation Group, Toddlers Group etc.)? Please identify them and tell us how many people enjoy the benefits of your hospitality.

Group	Number

9 The work of churches within their local community is often underestimated. Are there any other activities that you or the members of your church support on a regular basis (Coffee mornings, outreach work, bereavement counselling etc)? Please list them and tell us how many people you support.

Activity	Number of People Supported	Number of Workers and volunteers

10 What benefits do you feel your church brings to your local community?

11 Are there any particular local, social problems or issues that your church has tried to address in the last five years? Please tell us what you have done.

12 If you were offered a grant of £40,000 a year for three years from a local regeneration scheme what activities or project would you like to undertake?

13 In your local area there are different funding opportunities available to community and voluntary groups. Have you ever applied for any financial assistance from national, local and European government sources or national agencies (e.g. Single Regeneration Budget, Urban II, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, European Social Fund, Active Communities, National Lottery, Countryside Agency schemes) to help develop your church, church buildings or your local community? If so please outline the support you have received and the aims of your application.

14 How easy was the application process? For example did you have enough information or support to apply?

15 Who took responsibility for developing and writing the application process?

16 Did you work in partnership with any other religious or non-religious organization. If so please state who that was and how successful was the partnership.

17 Do you feel you have received enough information about regeneration and funding opportunities in your area?

18 Have you heard of the Local Strategic Partnership. If yes, please tell us what your involvement has been.

19 In the South West there is a Council of Faiths that seeks to ensure that the voices of faith groups are heard at a strategic level. Are there any issues that are of particular concern to your church that you feel should be raised at a regional level?

20 Applying for funding from funding agencies can be difficult. Are there any other issues or experiences you think we should know about regarding your church's experience of funding. Thank you for your help in completing this applications.

Thank you for your help in completing this questionnaire.
Please return it to me using the enclosed stamped address envelope.
Dr R.H.Kimberlee, University of the West of England (Bristol), Building 650,
Bristol Business Park, Frenchay, Bristol, BS16 1QY

Questionnaire for Faith Groups which had not received funding

1 Please tell us the name of your temple.

2 Please tell us your position in the worshipping community.

3 How long has your temple served the local community?

4 How long have you been working for your worshipping community?

5 Which community does your faith group serve? (Please describe the geographical boundaries e.g. Hartcliffe and Withywood)

6 Kindly describe the types of people who come regularly to your main services (e.g. elderly, young families, a mixture etc.)

7 What is your group's mission in your local community?

8 Does your temple host on a regular basis any community groups who are not necessarily directly connected with your temple (e.g. the Scouts, Conservation Group, Toddlers Group etc.)? Please identify them and tell us how many people enjoy the benefits of your hospitality.

Group	Number
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9 The work of religious groups within their local community is often underestimated. Are there any other activities that you or the members of your church support on a regular basis (Coffee mornings, outreach work, bereavement counselling etc)? Please list them and tell us how many people you support.

Activity	Number of People Supported	Number of Workers and volunteers
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10 What other benefits do you feel your temple brings to your local community?

11 Are there any particular local, social problems or issues that your temple has tried to address in the last five years? Please tell us what you have done.

12 If you were offered a grant of £40,000 a year for three years from a local regeneration scheme what activities or project would you like to undertake?

13 In your local area there are funding opportunities available for community and voluntary groups. Have you ever applied for any financial assistance from national, local or European government sources or national agencies (e.g. Single Regeneration Budget, Urban II, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, European Social Fund, Active Communities, National Lottery, Countryside Agency Schemes etc) to help develop your group, buildings or your local community? If so please identify the source of funding you applied for and tell us what help you received with your application.

14 Have you heard about any funding opportunities to which your group may apply? Please tell us what they were?

15 Existing research suggests there are many reasons why faith communities do not apply for funding to support their work and activities in the community. Please tick any of the following explanations that you feel apply to you.

Explanations for why your group has not applied for funding	Tick
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We are too small.

We did not realise there were funding opportunities available.

We have been ignored by local officials before.

Negative headlines about religious groups in the national and local media make us reluctant to get involved.

We are not in a recognised regeneration area.

We do not have any partners in the community to share the burden of the application process.

We do not accept the values held by local regeneration agents and workers.

We cannot accept that the government is serious about involving faith communities in regeneration activities.

We feel that our religious group is often discriminated against by local officials.

We do not have sufficient resources to launch a bid for funding.

We do not have sufficient resources to be partners in a bid for funding.

Most of the other voluntary groups and regeneration activists who meet in the local area meet during the day which is difficult for our members.

We have received information on funding applications in the past but they were difficult to understand.

We feel that existing regeneration initiatives are not actually addressing the needs of the community.

We do not like the idea of having to undertake an evaluation of the work we would do in the community if we were given regeneration funding.

The local council has always ignored us in the past.

We do not accept the equal opportunities policies that are an essential part of regeneration activity.

Where we are based we feel remote from key individuals who are important decision makers in our local area.

We are more concerned with an individual's spiritual welfare than their material or social needs.

We feel that the local community do not want us to get involved in their activities.

We have found it extremely difficult to deal with local bureaucracies.

We believe that regeneration activities are not in line with our mission in this community.

We do not like to take on long term managerial responsibilities.

We were involved in regeneration initiatives in the past and did not like the process.

We feel that we are seen as not being 'politically correct' and are consequently reluctant to get involved.

The work we do is largely about working with individuals rather than communities.

Below is a space where you might like to expand on the issues raised in the above statements.

16 Looking at your local community what has been the benefits/drawbacks of local regeneration activities.

17 A strong local community can only be built on an effective coalition of groups and individuals. If other religious and non-religious groups in your local area wanted to plan to develop community action would members of your church be interested in participating? Please explain.

18 Have you heard of the Local Strategic Plan?

19 Has your faith group ever been invited to participate in developing a Local Strategic Plan?

20 Would you welcome further information on regeneration initiatives in your local area?

21 Would you welcome additional support or advice on making a bid for regeneration funds?

22 Please tell us how local government agencies can help you to help people in need in your local community.

23 In the South West there is a Council of Faiths that seeks to ensure that the voices of faith groups are heard at a strategic level. Are there any issues that are a particular concern to your faith group that you feel should be raised at a regional level.

Thank you for your help in completing this questionnaire.
Please return it to me using the enclosed stamped address envelope.

Dr R.H.Kimberlee, University of the West of England (Bristol),
Building 650, Bristol Business Park, Frenchay, Bristol, BS16 1QY

Appendix 7 - Glossary

BME	Black & Minority Ethnic communities
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DSS	Department of Social Services
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
GOSW	Government Office South West
LSC	Learning & Skills Council
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NCH	National Children's Home
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
NR	Neighbourhood Renewal
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
SW	South West
URC	United Reformed Church
VCS	Voluntary & Community Sector





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