



Sheffield Faiths Forum



Faith Communities provide an enduring presence in Sheffield:

seeing, understanding and responding to the changing needs of local people:

an integral part of successful community life.

With Sheffield Faiths Forum Sheffield's faith communities have moved from uncoordinated and patchy involvement in city structures to the formation of an accountable Forum with a growing ability to enable effective engagement with partners and agencies at all levels.

The Forum's key challenge is to continue the process of supporting and equipping members of faith communities to play a full part in city life at neighbourhood, community assembly and city wide level and extend their role in meeting needs in their localities.

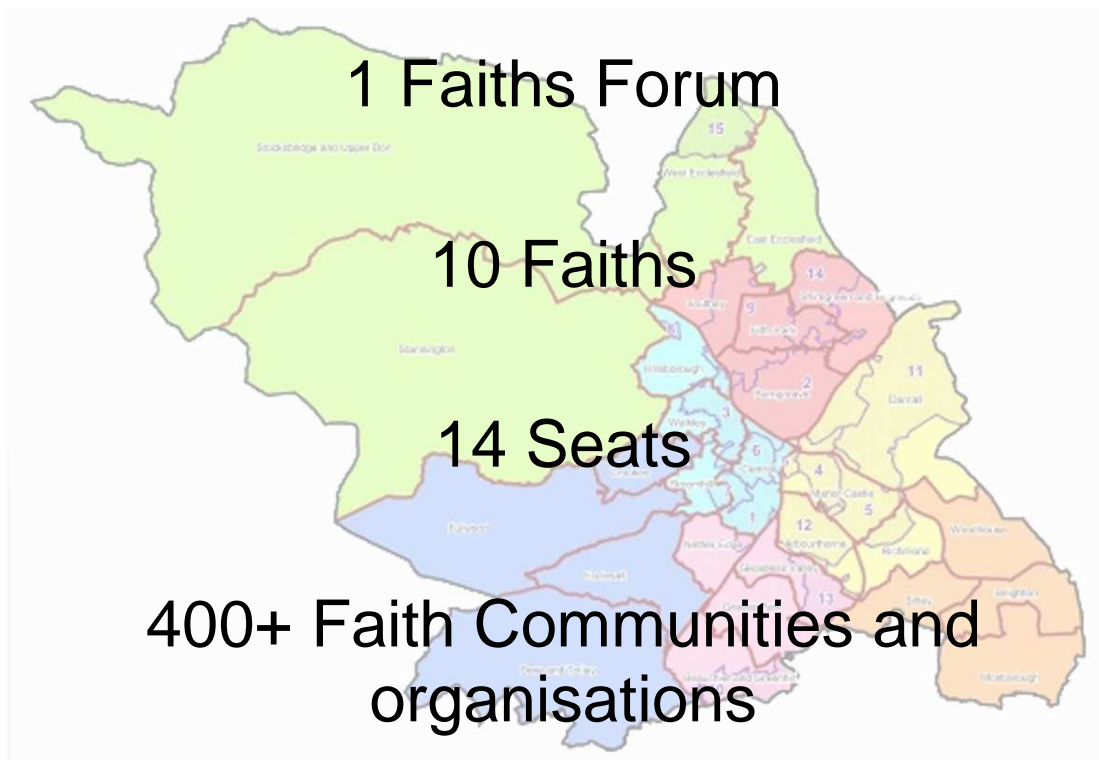
To respond to this challenge the Faiths Forum has developed

- integrated training programmes,
- models for engagement at local and community assembly level,
- a strategy for infrastructure development to enable the perspectives and expertise of faith communities to contribute to the development of policy and practice in the city.

“An essential aspect of engagement in contemporary society is the development of networks between faith communities and secular communities.” *Commission on Urban Life and Faith*



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“The amount of faith related activity taking place in Sheffield is massive.”

30% involved in activities that contribute to a strong economy

62% carry out activities that contribute towards the neighbourhood being a better place to live

80% involved in activities that promote inclusive, healthy communities

52% provide services and facilities for children and young people

“There is evidence of activity amongst a diverse range of groups not only for the benefit of their members but also for the wider community in their local neighbourhoods, across the city and for people coming as strangers to the city.”



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2007-2010 Achievements

- Identified 400+ Faith Communities and organisations across the city
- Established a Faiths Forum drawn from those communities and able to engage with partners and agencies
- Audited the activity of faith communities
- Increased the representation of faith communities in civic life
- Developed training to enable a wider range of members from faith communities to engage in civic life
- Enabled faith communities to respond to and shape emerging agendas in partnership with other organisations
- Developed and supported faith communities to work together in new and significant ways
- Produced three short films showcasing the contribution of faith communities in the city, promoting the Faith & Community Development course, and 'An Interview with an Imam'
- Worked with faith communities and local partners in eleven areas of the city, across all seven Community Assembly Areas:
 - Burngreave
 - Lowedges
 - Sharrow
 - Darnall
 - Netheredge
 - Shiregreen
 - Dore
 - Parson Cross
 - Stannington
 - Handsworth
 - Stocksbridge

The Faiths Forum has contributed to:

- The City Strategy
- Single Equality Scheme
- Community Cohesion Strategy
- PVE Advisory Strategy
- Social Inclusion Forum
- Emergency Planning
- Safeguarding
- Development of a Third Sector Assembly
- DAAT Strategy
- Child Poverty Strategy



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The Forum has worked by itself and with partners to develop:

- 2 Preventing Violent Extremism Conferences for the VCF sector
- Facilitation of the PVE Advisory Group
- Faith and Community Development Training Programme
- Faith Awareness Training Programme
- How Your City Works with Faith Communities Training Programme
- Faiths Together events linking large numbers of faith communities with statutory and VCF partners and agencies at Community Assembly level
- Groundbreaking ESOL research and development within faith communities
- Madrassahs and Children with Special Educational Needs Conference
- A toolkit for Community Forums to engage with faith communities
- A model for engaging with faith communities at Community Assembly level
- A Women of Faith project linking women from five communities
- The development of a Sheffield Muslim Women Network
- Faith and the Environment Conference
- Spiritual Spaces Conference
- Links between 24 members of Highfield Trinity Church & Usmania Mosque leading to research & training exploring joint approaches to the use of buildings to meet locally identified needs.

Sheffield First Partnership Boards

Members of faith communities have sat on:

- ❖ The Sheffield First Board (1 member)
- ❖ Safer & Sustainable Communities (3 members)
- ❖ Children & Young People (1 member)
- ❖ Environment Board (1 member)
- ❖ Inclusive & Cosmopolitan (1 member)



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Outcomes

What this means for Sheffield

There will be:

- An effective, inclusive and accountable route for faith communities to engage with statutory, voluntary and community organisations.
- A focused voice for faith communities to influence decision making in the city and articulate their contribution to city life.
- A prioritised programme of activities developed and led by faith communities, addressing concerns and providing benefits for the wider community.
- Stronger communities able to support each other and take a common approach to issues and concerns
- Increased understanding of faith communities and opportunities to work with them for statutory agencies and VCF organizations
- Improved service delivery



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Local, Neighbourhood and Area Work

What do we do well?

We provide the extra capacity needed for effective working between faith communities, VCF organisations, statutory partners and agencies.

Many faith communities are working at full capacity to deliver the services they provide within their areas. Many just get on with this, unseen and unheard: they just do it. Many lack the experience, skills and opportunities to work together with other faith communities and partners. With our support, good practice can be shared between groups to help the less experienced begin to make a contribution to service delivery.

Without our work:

- . In the main only the large faith community bases have the resources to engage, which can lead to a distortion of priorities and agendas.
- . Statutory partners and agencies can miss out on working with the full range of communities and groups in local areas.
- . Skills, expertise, perspectives and ideas of some communities remain untapped.
- . Mistrust of statutory partners – their motives and ability to deliver – continues.

How do we do it?

1. Develop & maintain **details of faith communities**, their contacts, activities, areas of expertise and experience, across the city.
2. Develop & maintain **effective relationships with faith communities** – taking the time to build understanding of their perspectives, needs & priorities and the issues they see as important in local areas.
3. Plan with faith communities to provide **opportunities to work with local partners**, bringing their perspective and understanding of local issues and current themes. We don't just invite people to meetings – we invite them to plan, shape and contribute to meetings – and the follow up, where change and development happen.
4. **Train members of faith communities**, giving them the skills and understanding to increase their effectiveness and ability to be involved in civic life.