

# Sheffield Faiths Forum

## *Community Cohesion Briefing June 2008*

### **Why a briefing about Community Cohesion?**

“Our Vision for community cohesion in Sheffield is one where ‘The City and its communities are at ease with themselves and each other’.” – *Sheffield’s Interim Community Cohesion Strategy, January 2008*

‘Community Cohesion’ was one of four priority issues identified by faith communities at the Faiths Forum Annual Review event in March 2008. Sheffield Faiths Forum is one of a number of partners helping to develop a Community Cohesion Strategy and Action Plan for the city. We are keen to help individual faith groups and organisations take part in this process and highlight the ongoing work that faith groups across the city are involved in which helps to make Sheffield a more cohesive place to live.

This paper briefly covers:

- What has happened in Sheffield so far?
- How has Sheffield Faiths Forum contributed?
- How can you get involved?

### **What has happened in Sheffield so far?**

The past 12 months has seen the development of a new strategic approach to ‘Community Cohesion’ in the city. This reflects a wider national agenda as well as particular local issues such as increasing EU migration, changing Black and Ethnic Minority populations, strains on the supply of affordable housing and fear of crime. On the Government’s key measure of cohesion, Sheffield lags significantly behind the national average.

- **Summer 2007:** Sheffield City Council launched a consultation exercise through the Star and the Council Website about community cohesion and what it means to be a ‘Sheffliedder’.
- **Autumn / Winter 2007:** Community Cohesion Strategy Working Group established by Sheffield First (Local Strategic Partnership), with representation from the Statutory (Council, Police, Sheffield Homes) and Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors. The Steering Group looked at feedback from the consultation and worked on drafting a Community Cohesion Strategy.
- **February 2008:** Interim Community Cohesion Strategy approved by Sheffield First (not yet formally adopted by Sheffield City Council). The strategy includes a vision for Sheffield, aspirations, principles of working, key issues facing Sheffield and priority areas for action.
- **Spring 2008:** Sheffield First Safer Communities Partnership Board takes lead on developing the ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ agenda in Sheffield, in partnership with South Yorkshire Police.
- **Summer 2008+:** Working Group plans to make links with local groups that contribute to cohesion in the city, identify good practice and develop a city-wide action plan.

## How has the Faiths Forum contributed?

Alongside practical work with faith groups at a local level (eg faith group visits, faith awareness and leadership courses, neighbourhood inter faith projects), we have:

- Met with key decision-makers to discuss the implications and opportunities for faith communities eg Equality and Diversity Manager (Sheffield City Council), South Yorkshire Police lead on Preventing Violent Extremism, Head of Cohesion and Communities from Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber
- Submitted a formal response, from a faith perspective, to the city-wide cohesion consultation
- Participated in the Community Cohesion Strategy Working Group – ensuring the positive contribution of faith groups is highlighted
- Begun collecting experiences and intelligence from grass roots faith groups about the positive impact they have on community cohesion.

## How can you get involved?

Faith groups are already key agents in building and supporting communities across the city – providing a wide range of opportunities for ‘bonding’ together and ‘linking’ with others in the course of their devotional and community activities.

What else can you do? – here are some ideas!

- Reflect as a faith group, how do we enable community cohesion? Do we create any barriers to community cohesion?
- Share with us what you are doing to make Sheffield a city where everyone can get along – this will help the Faiths Forum to produce an impact report for the Community Cohesion Strategy Working Group on the contribution of faith groups. We are particularly interested in finding out about your activities which:
  - promote communication between, and support leadership within, communities
  - provide opportunities for people from different backgrounds to meet together and to get involved in the wider community activities
  - help young and old people understand each other better
  - promote equality and fairness for all

If you would like to share specific examples of activity that you are involved in then please contact Tim Wright on 0114 2536730 or email [tim@offer.org.uk](mailto:tim@offer.org.uk)

- Participate in the Sheffield First consultation event - **Getting Along Together – What’s Your Strategy?** on 17 July (see enclosed blue sheet for details)
- Get involved in local events taking place around community cohesion, for example WalkTalk on 25 July.

## Contact us:

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News, events and resources are regularly updated on our website:

[www.sheffieldfaithsforum.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldfaithsforum.org.uk) – make sure you visit us for the latest information.