

Faith Network News

September 2006



Update on Sheffield Faiths Forum

Those of you who came to the last network meeting at Sheffield Hallam University in November 2005 were involved in agreeing plans for establishing a Faiths Forum for Sheffield. At that time OFFER and a small steering group drawn from different faith communities throughout the City were applying for funding from the 'Faith communities capacity building fund'. We were pleased to hear in February that our bid was successful and set about recruiting a worker to help get the Forum up and running. Eventually (!) we were able to appoint Tim Wright to the post of Faith Network Development Worker and he started work at the end of July. The post has been funded until March 2007 to support the development of a city-wide Faiths Forum for Sheffield, to enable faith communities to increase their impact on regeneration and community cohesion, and facilitate their influence and representation on Sheffield First and the Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum.

The proposed structure of the Forum, which we discussed last November, includes an appointed 'Faiths Forum' (with members drawn from local faith communities) working within a wide inclusive Faith Network and alongside the established Sheffield Faith Leaders Group. We will be producing regular information sheets, like this one, supporting the engagement of faith communities within the life of the city.

One of our key tasks will be to make contact with as many of the local faith groups in Sheffield as possible in order that we can engage with, and support the full diversity of experiences and beliefs within the City.

Aims of the Faiths Forum:

- an increase in faith group involvement in the regeneration of the city, harnessing their resources at the heart of local communities
- co-ordinated activities from grass roots to Faith Leaders that strengthen community relations
- increased understanding between and within faith communities and improved religious literacy within the city
- increased ability as faith communities to respond to emergencies and crises
- the ability to identify and explain the role of faith communities in contributing to benefits for wider society.

Meeting of Sheffield Faith Network – 2 November

Please come along to our next open meeting for faith groups on Thursday 2 November to find out more about the work of Sheffield Faiths Forum (see enclosed flyer). Sheffield Hallam University Multifaith Chaplaincy have again kindly agreed to host the event entitled "Growing the Faiths Forum", and a vegetarian buffet will be provided to start the evening at 18:30. The purpose of the meeting is so that you can decide the key issues that the Forum should start to address (eg Islamophobia, community cohesion, rise of fascism, support for asylum seekers, etc), as well as hearing the latest news on progress in setting up the Forum and how YOU can be involved.

Spaces are limited so please book your free place using the enclosed flyer, via the website www.offer.org.uk or by calling Tim Wright on 0114 2750462

Applying for a seat on the Faiths Forum

Advance notice that we shall soon be inviting applications for individuals from the various faith communities in Sheffield to take up seats on the Faiths Forum. We are looking for people who can link back to the whole of their faith communities, rather than 'official representatives', so that the Forum can listen to and speak with local neighbourhoods. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they are:

- knowledgeable of their faith and influential within their faith community
- committed to working with and respecting people of other faiths, and
- engaged in the life of their city and able to contribute to its regeneration.

As well as mailing out to everyone on our database, the application process will be published in full on the OFFER website and there will be adverts in the local press when the recruitment round is open.

How Your City Works

Want to learn more about how to use your voice wisely?

"How your city works" is a course that OFFER runs to help the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector through the maze of power and decision making processes in the city, so you can influence in a more effective way.

There are six sessions starting on Thursday October 12 through to November 16, 10-11 followed by lunch, at SCEDU in Mowbray Street, S3.

Please contact Natalie Hunt at OFFER for more information and a booking form on 275 0462 or Natalie@offer.org.uk.

Local Events

We have been approached by a number of local faith groups to advertise their activities. We have limited space available but if you would like to publicise your activity in our next newsletter then please contact Tim Wright.

A series of Muslim / Christian Dialogues will be held on Sunday afternoons from 2.30pm - 4.00pm in November at the Broomhall Centre, Broomspring Lane. Leading the dialogues will be Dr. Omar an Islamic scholar and Rev. Dr. Sarah Hall minister of St. Andrew's Church in Broomhall. For more information please contact Shirley Cameron on 0114 2729105 or email broomhallcentre@broomhallcentre.f9.co.uk

City of Sanctuary - 1st Anniversary Celebration, Tuesday 3rd October, 6-9pm, Victoria Hall, Norfolk St. Come and celebrate a year of working towards a City of Sanctuary with dinner and discussion about your ideas for the future. It is an opportunity to meet other supporters and asylum-seekers, to learn more about City of Sanctuary, and to explore together our vision for Sheffield as a place of hospitality and welcome for asylum-seekers and refugees. The meal and event are free, but places are limited and need to be booked in advance by contacting: sanctuarysheffield@fastmail.co.uk or visit www.cityofsanctuary.com

What is OFFER?

OFFER is the city-wide network for all of the voluntary, community and faith organisations in Sheffield (the VCF sector). Our main functions include:

- *strengthening the voice of the sector* on environment, health & well-being, jobs, learning & skills, services for young people and older people, and other areas of policy,
- *influencing strategies and delivery* through ensuring our sector is fairly represented on Sheffield First Boards, other city-wide and neighbourhood bodies and
- *supporting development of networks* and representation including community forums, networks for communities of interest, local partnerships and any groupings that empower our sector.

Contact us:

Tim Wright, Faith Network Development Worker, OFFER
4th Floor, Furnival House, 48 Furnival Gate, Sheffield S1 4QP
Tel & Fax 0114 2750462 Email tim@offer.org.uk
www.offer.org.uk