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National Association of
Standing Advisory Councils
on Religious Education

SACRE BRIEFING

Issue: 12

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New Chair's Welcome

These last few months have been quite momentous, both for our country and (to a possibly lesser extent) our organisation, with both involving a rather sudden change at the top!

We held a hugely successful AGM and Annual Conference (see below) in London in May. Shortly after this David Hampshire, our Chair was delighted to take up a position with the Inter Faith Network and had to resign as the Chair of NASACRE. This meant that I, having served as Vice-Chair since May 2015, took over the chairmanship earlier than expected, with immediate effect. David remains on the executive as a co-opted member.

At the same time we had been planning to make changes to the way we work as an executive, so that we can continue to work efficiently over the next number of years. Sharon Artley, who has been a wonderful support to the NASACRE Executive for many years, ostensibly as Membership Secretary, but in reality doing far more than that - including running our invoicing, website and NASACRE briefing, to name just three - has decided to retire from NASACRE. We have therefore decided to employ an Administrator to try to cover some of Sharon's huge workload, so a big welcome to Marie Cooper who is sending this Briefing to you. Denise Chaplin, who many in the RE community will know well, has taken over as Editor of *SACRE Briefing* from this edition onwards – so a big welcome to her too!

A really big thank you and farewell to Sharon, who happily for us has said she will be at email length to answer all our internal questions in the immediate future to ensure you continue to get the support you need.

Celebrating SACREs and Contacting NASACRE

We are well aware that sometimes it is said that SACREs can be ineffective. We don't believe that and would like to counter the allegation, by celebrating the work of our member SACREs. We have started to do this through our Twitter account @NASACRE so please let us know about any work your SACRE is doing, from reviewing and launching a syllabus, organizing a conference, or even just holding a meeting in an interesting place! Either tweet us a message, or email me, the **Chair**.

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Another consequence of our changes for you as NASACRE members, is that the old 'memsec' email address has ceased to exist. So from now on, for finance and invoicing queries, payments and purchase order numbers, please contact **Michael Metcalf, Treasurer**.

Important Constitutional Issues

The AGM left us with one major unresolved issue: we currently have a **constitution** which is no longer fit for purpose and appears to not correspond to the way that NASACRE has worked for many years.

Over the last year the executive has worked to produce a **new proposed constitution** which will enable us to continue serving our members, supporting, strengthening and promoting the work done by local SACREs and representing the interests of members at a national level, for many years to come. However, due to the outmoded constitution we are currently working with, it was impossible at the AGM to agree this change. It was therefore suggested that we conduct a vote electronically to ascertain that our member SACREs agree to the new constitution.

We are asking you to take the new constitution to your Autumn term SACRE meeting and to vote to either agree to the new constitution or not.

After your vote, an authorised person should record your SACRE's vote on this form. A reminder about this process will be sent to SACREs in December, and any SACRE not informing of us of their decision by Feb 28th 2017 will be assumed to be in agreement with the new constitution.

Paul Smalley, Chair

Conference Follow Up

All materials from this year's Conference can be found on the Conference 2016 materials page.

There was a real buzz around this year's very well attended 'Shaping the Future' conference. Since we met at the previous year's AGM, three significant reports with recommendations that impact on RE had been published. We were

Subscribe AGM. Share Past Issues fortunate enough to have a co-author of each of these reports contributing at the Tr

Lady Butler-Schloss was our morning keynote speaker and Professor Adam Dinham's presentation led us into the afternoon conference. The Rt Hon Charles Clarke, last year's keynote speaker and our new Patron, was able to join us and participated in the afternoon Panel. All three provoked lively floor discussions.

The afternoon seminar that engaged with recommendations from the reports, generated some high quality responses that the NASACRE Executive is carefully reviewing. A summary of these will be available on the website in due course. In the meantime, SACREs might like to use the discussion support sheets used on the day (see link above) in their own SACRE meetings.

The themes of three previous AGMs: Challenging SACREs (2013), Rising to the Challenge (2014) and Meeting the Challenge (2015) all explored the practical and creative ways many SACREs are dealing with the issues facing us. Resources from these AGMs are still available on the **website**, and we carried forward this crucial theme in a new way via a Sharing Wall. During the day, delegates posted their most successful ideas on the wall which address the challenges that SACREs identified at the 2015 AGM:

- Engaging with Schools: having an impact, making a difference to them
- SACRE Membership Issues: Group A representation, Teachers and Councillors
- LA Support and funding for SACREs
- Agreed Syllabus Reviews
- Dealing with Academies and Academisation

This networking and discussion opportunity was very well received and generated over 30 examples of good practice, available on the website

Completed evaluation forms give us a picture of delegate experience. Delegates were asked to grade 12 aspects of the day from venue and food through to outcomes for their own SACREs. An overwhelming majority was very appreciative of the venue, food and speakers as well as the afternoon seminar and panel. A few requested a shorter AGM and the Executive are considering other ways of conducting NASACRE business as well as discussing other suggestions to inform planning next year's event.

Once again we are very grateful for the level of thoughtful feedback and positive comments provided by our delegates. This encourages us to keep doing the things that are useful year on year, as well as respond to the evolving needs of our members.

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Sushma Sahajpal

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Westhill / NASACRE Awards 2016-17

At NASACRE's Annual Conference on May 17th, the Awards Panel was able to announce that it had agreed to give Awards to three of the applications received, with a fourth application still under consideration. It was further announced that the deadline for applications would be extended to the end of July. In the event, only one additional application was received. The Panel has now agreed to give an Award to this application, and also to the SACRE that had still been under consideration at the time of the AGM.

The full list of Awards for 2016-17 is therefore as follows:

£2,900 **Bedford Borough** SACRE

£3,800 **Berkshire Hub** (the six SACREs in the county of Berkshire)

£4,000 **Liverpool** SACRE

£4,000 **Newham** SACRE

£4,000 **North Yorkshire** SACRE

NASACRE congratulates these SACREs on gaining an Award, and looks forward to acknowledging and celebrating their projects as they successfully progress and flourish.

Michael Metcalf

Short Course Results and where to find them

Useful information for SACREs when preparing the Annual Report

There has been confusion for SACREs throughout the nation about access to the GCSE Short Course results as some local authorities provide them and some appear to have no access to them.

Firstly, they are available and the national picture can be found on the **Joint Council for Qualifications website**. This allows SACREs to be able to make comparisons of the local data with national data.

Secondly, they are available at a school/academy level and local authority level to all local authorities. It appears to be a matter of knowing that they can request and

process this data. Hence, there is no excuse for denying this data to SACREs but SACREs need to be proactive in requesting the data – which will be considered 'clean data' (with all the re-marks accounted for) in November of each year – although provisional data is available from the end of August.

David Hampshire

Exciting news !! SACREs Award

The Accord Coalition helps to administer an annual award for those schools in England and Wales that work hardest at promoting inclusivity and the growth of mutual understanding, especially on the grounds of religion and ethnicity. Many SACREs will be familiar with their work as they have circulated information about the award to their schools annually encouraging them to celebrate and be acknowledged for their good work.

This year, just as a one off, the 2017 Inclusivity Award **will** be accepting and only accepting nominations from SACREs. Nominations will be accepted during the autumn of 2016. By doing this the Accord Coalition wishes to raise awareness about the innovative approaches that some SACREs are pursuing to boost the growth of mutual understanding in their areas. *"The 2017 Award seeks to reward those SACREs in England and Wales that, despite current demands and pressures, have worked hardest and gone that extra step to help boost the growth of inclusion, cohesion and mutual understanding between those of different religions and beliefs."*

The deadline for entries is Monday December 12th and prizes will be announced in the New Year.

Download the **application form**. [Click here](#) for full details of the award.

The REC launches independent Commission on RE

An independent Commission has been established by the Religious Education Council (REC) to make wide-ranging recommendations in relation to Religious Education (RE) in schools.

The Commission has been asked by the REC to review the legal, education and policy frameworks for RE in all primary schools, secondary schools and further

education colleges in England. The establishment of the Commission comes at a critical time for RE, and its work may well be influential.

In addition, the government's wider educational reforms will almost certainly have a significant impact on RE. The intention for all schools to become academies for example, means that there will be severe implications for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs). The Commission on Religious Education will review this challenge along with the broader education and policy issues that affect RE. More information about the Commission, including its membership, can be found on the [REC website](#).

NASACRE is of course an important member body of the REC and our representatives on the REC would very much value the comments, opinions and views of member SACREs on the work of the Commission. NASACRE would therefore encourage member SACREs to consider including a discussion about the Commission on agendas for future meetings and to send any recommendations, suggestions, etc., to our Chair.

Lesley Prior

Response to Brexit

In my role of NASACRE Chair, I was able to attend a Colloquium held at Liverpool Hope University in the aftermath of the referendum vote on leaving the EU. At the Colloquium there was much discussion of the contribution that RE (along with PSHE and Citizenship) might make to a post-Brexit society (with political events unfolding around us as we talked, and Theresa May being declared PM during the meeting!).

On our behalf I signed an **open letter** to the new Education Secretary, Justine Greening.

I commend your SACREs to note its content and, as always, send your feedback to us at NASACRE.

Paul Smalley, Chair

APPG Report on Religious Literacy - a reflection

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education (APPG/RE), under its new Chair Fiona Bruce, MP, took many people by surprise when it branched out into an enquiry on Religious Literacy, having already dispensed with its previous partners from the Religious Education Council (REC) as facilitators for the APPG, in favour of House of Commons support.

The APPG/RE set up a consultation process, with evidence being heard from a number of invited individuals and organisations, and with a general invitation to all interested people and groups to submit material.

Given the complexity of the field of enquiry, it is remarkable that the APPG/RE has now produced a **report** of its findings "Improving Religious Literacy" in such a relatively short space of time. It is even more remarkable that, in spite of signs of hasty production (two clashing numbering systems, some typos), the report stands up well, with a wide range of pertinent recommendations. It contains an impressive list of references (enough for several PhD theses!), and it is a compelling and substantial contribution to public debate, not just about RE, but about the healthy development of society as a whole.

The report is eminently quotable at many points. It is a vigorous and stimulating document. However, its working definition of "Religious Literacy", comprising four elements, is less quotable and will call for the reader's powers of concentration and acuity. The cumbersome and laboured formula may point to a sense that the concept of Religious Literacy is not entirely self-explanatory, and perhaps also to an awareness that discussion of Religious Literacy has not been without controversy.

Much more positively, many of us will heartily echo the report's summary of the predicament facing RE today: (Para 6.6)

Many of the difficulties identified in the teaching of RE were long-term and structural. The situation is now urgent. Respondents argued that RE in many schools has been marginalisedSome schools are not fulfilling their statutory requirementtoo often RE lessons are being taught by teachers who are not specialists in the subject and who do not have access to (adequate) continuing professional development. ...other factors have also had an adverse effect on the quality of the subject, including the exclusion of RE from the English Baccalaureate and a decline in resources for SACREs. This report is not the first to note such findings.

Equally trenchant, and strongly affirming, are the words of the APPG/RE Chair in her foreword:

"We are....entering a defining period for our country, our national life and our national identity. The shape of *our religious landscape is changing, as is the place of religion in the public sphere, our private lives and our local communities..... It is*

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"...the provision of high quality school-based RE, and good teaching and learning about religion beyond the school years in the whole of life context, cannot be allowed to fall off the agenda of the government or Parliament. I will continue....to highlight to government the importance of providing excellent RE for every child...."

Of the report's twenty four recommendations, the first ten relate to RE. Many of these ten are concerned with ensuring that RE is taught to a consistent standard of excellence by a plentiful army of specialist or properly prepared teachers who have good access to continuing professional development (CPD), to which we all loudly say "Amen". In addition, the report calls for training in Religious Literacy to be incorporated into all Secondary Initial Teacher Training and to be available more widely in CPD programmes for all teachers. It also encourages the Minister to re-examine the exclusion of RE from the EBacc, and "for all relevant parties to participate in the ongoing discussions about the legal framework for RE in schools and other major issues."

The remaining recommendations underline the argument that while RE is an essential resource for promoting Religious Literacy, the responsibility for improving Religious Literacy within society as a whole cannot be left entirely at the RE door, or even in schools themselves. Rather, this responsibility rests on all of us, with the Government needing to take the lead. So within the report there are recommendations for various government departments and civil servants, for the media (e.g. that the new BBC Charter should include a commitment to promote Religious Literacy), for expert editorial scrutiny of policy documents, for encouraging public engagement in inter-communal dialogue, projects and outreach, for channeling funding into community initiatives delivering Religious Literacy, and so on.

The title page of the report makes it clear that the report has no official status; it is simply "A Contribution to the Debate". Nevertheless, it has been produced and issued by a group of people who do have influence, and who have access to key government ministers and departments. We must hope that the report will add significantly to the case being constantly put to the government that good quality RE in schools, while crucially important for our personal and societal wellbeing, is unsustainable in the present circumstances: something must be done, soon.

Michael Metcalf

Tell MAMA Annual Report 2015

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The **Tell MAMA Annual Report** was launched in Parliament on 29th June this year. It highlights hate crime against Muslims in the UK. The report, entitled: *The Geography of Anti-Muslim Hatred*, looked at where Muslims reported hate crime against them. A number of interesting things were revealed:

- The majority of hate crimes were directed at women who were visibly Muslim
- The majority were perpetrated by white males
- The majority occurred on or near an A Road or transport hub

There was no correlation between places that Muslims were attacked and places of high unemployment or social deprivation.

11% of attacks were in places of education. In relation to this one of the comments in the report is: It is important that headteachers, teachers, and safeguarding leads in schools are trained to deal with Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate (page 29).

The report also noted:

Given that schools are an important place for educating and socialising young people in multicultural settings, the fact that there are more incidents in educational institutions than took place against Muslim institutions is troubling. (page 39).

SACREs may wish to look at this **report in full** and ask the local authority what it is doing in light of the report. It may also want to ask how the local authority is working with transport providers to ensure that pupils who are identified as Muslims are being kept safe from bullying, intimidation and hate crime. What is clear is that girls and young women are much more vulnerable than their male counterparts so the question arises: what is the local authority and schools within the authority's area doing to ensure that these pupils are kept safe.

Of course there is a further question worth asking: if so much time is being given in many schools to the teaching of Islam in RE, why isn't this having a more positive impact on the lives of Muslims in Britain? If RE teachers are proud of their contribution to promoting shared values and community cohesion why is the percentage of hate crime against Muslims so high in schools?

David Hampshire

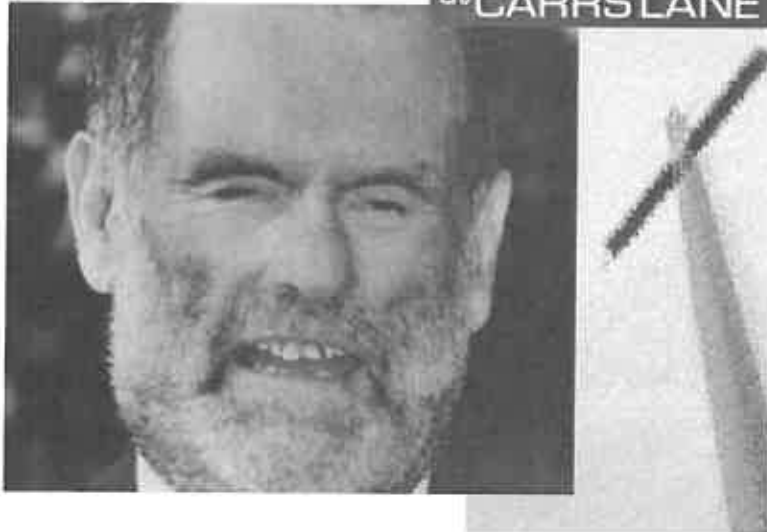
Subject: Remembering John Hull

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Remembering John Hull at



**friend,
colleague,
teacher...
inspiration**



A fond obituary of John Hull was published in the SACRE Briefing a year ago. Julie Grove, who shared her memories then, fills us in on the celebration of his work in July.

The name of John Hull is familiar to anyone who has been involved with religious education in the last 30 years. As the tributes from all around the world showed at the time, his death last year was mourned by many people, including many in the field of RE. After his funeral last summer, it seemed fitting to find an occasion to acknowledge his personal contributions to the lives of so many individuals, institutions and causes, a commitment that was fulfilled on Wednesday 20th July, almost exactly the anniversary of his death, at The Church at Carrs Lane in Birmingham.

The church was full. It was fitting that the celebration was held in the place where he had been a member for almost 50 years, treasuring his non-conformist roots, although he had worshipped latterly in the local parish church with his family. He was always a dissenter at heart! The event was organised in partnership with The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, where John spent the last 10 years of his life, changing his professional focus from RE to ministerial training; it was where so much of his passion for peace and justice could be expressed.

The date for the event was chosen to coincide with the launch of the film *Notes on Blindness*, based entirely on John's audio diaries from the mid-1980s; this account,

published in his book *Touching the Rock*, chronicles his experiences of sight loss and his journey into complete blindness. The film's showing followed a reflective act of worship drawing together threads in the tapestry of John's legacy, the two parts of the evening linked with an interval of lively chatter, accompanied by jazz. Live music from the band welcomed everyone as they gathered.

Brief snapshots from a wide variety of speakers illuminated John's legacy as activist inspiration; friend across faiths; theological teacher; academic mentor; religious educator; inspiration on blindness; teaching mentor; colleague and friend; author and a Carrs Laner. The reflections were interspersed with the haunting sound of a solo flute. The short address, given by Canon David Hewlett, Principal of Queen's, was based on John's book, *The Tactile Heart*.

In the film, which uses John's original audio recordings, actors lip-sync the voices as the story unfolds. It was both inspirational and heart breaking as we in the audience heard the inimitable voice we knew so well and realised again what was lost to us. Then gradually we all became absorbed into the emotion and pain of the experience being described, as John wrestled with himself and his faith, coming to terms with his blindness as a fact that forced itself to be acknowledged and then finally as a gift to be embraced. The film, which was movingly introduced for us by John's widow, Marilyn and the film-makers themselves, has received much acclaim from the critics. Premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, it had already won the Special Jury Prize at the 59th San Francisco Film Festival and then the Wellcome Trust Innovation and Storytelling Award at Sheffield Doc/Fest. It is certainly worth seeing, whether you knew this remarkable man personally or not.

John gave so much to others in life, in his teaching, in his leadership, in his creativity, in his wisdom, in his sense of humour and fun, in his living the Gospel and in his love for everyone; it was truly a privilege and a joy to be able to create this opportunity to recognise the gift from this lovely man to us all...but also to build on his legacy to the world.

Julie Grove
Former Secretary of NASACRE

The DVD of the film 'Notes on Blindness' will be released in October and is available for pre-order from Amazon

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Housekeeping

The updated **log-in details** that gives your SACRE access to the password protected sections of the NASACRE site, were sent out to clerks of member SACREs on 1st September.

You can now check if your **membership status** has been updated by checking in the **SACRE Directory**. There is a small 'NASACRE flower' next to a SACRE name in the SACRE Directory if the new subscription has been received. So please check your SACRE's membership status for 2016-17 and if necessary arrange or chase up payment of the membership fee.

We would be grateful if you would check that we have your correct **SACRE personnel details**. Please notify the NASACRE Administrator, **Marie Cooper** of the full details of required changes.

Annual SACRE reports should also be sent to Marie Cooper. (Please check required format on the **SACRE reports** page).

You can find this also find information about who to contact on our **Contacts page**.

Denise Chaplin

Items for your Autumn SACRE Meeting

- Note new contact details for NASACRE and feed forward any 'good news'.
- Ensure your SACRE members have the new password details and are able to access appropriate support from the site.
- Agree and cast your SACRE vote on the new NASACRE constitution.
- Note the letter to Justine Greening.
- Note / discuss the Commission on RE and if you have any comments for our REC reps, email them to the Chair.
- Discuss the questions posed about the teaching of Islam in the item on the Tell MAMA report. You might consider whether a sub-group investigates the relevance of the Tell MAMA survey to local concerns and how the LA is responding.

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Arrange training for your new SACRE members (also useful as a refresh for those who have been around for a while) using the training materials on the website.

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