

Executive summary

In 2006 the independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion was set up to explore how people in different communities and places in England were getting along and what more might be done to bring people together. They were asked to consider how local areas can make the most of the benefits delivered by increasing diversity – but also to consider how they can respond to the tensions it can sometimes cause. The Commission was tasked with developing practical approaches to building communities' own capacity to build cohesion.

In 2007 the Commission delivered its report *Our Shared Future* to government. Its ambitious recommendations and its ideas for renewed local and national collaboration point the way ahead for much of the Government's work on cohesion. Above all, the Commission's findings reinforced our belief that cohesion is something which is built locally.

In *Our Shared Future* the Commission asserted that the way in which relationships between people with different religions and beliefs developed over coming years would be important for integration and cohesion – and that there needed to be more constructive relationships between those who were religious and those who were not. In response to this the Government made the commitment to develop an inter faith strategy – our framework for partnership.

This document *Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society* aims to create more local opportunities both for face to face dialogue which supports a greater understanding of shared values as well as an appreciation of distinctiveness; and for side by side collaborative social action where people come together and share their time, energy and skills to improve their local neighbourhood.

Three core principles underpin the Framework for Partnership:

Partnership: valuing the contributions made by partners and working together to increase their impact.

Empowerment: people and government, working together to make life better.

Choice: local communities deciding what works best for them.

To help ensure that this Framework adds value to existing work and results in action, we held a three month public consultation which provided us with a valuable opportunity to hear from as broad a range of people as possible about how government can best support dialogue and social action and the circumstances in which it works best. Over 185 responses were received from a broad range of organisations and individuals. A summary of responses is being published alongside this document and is available to download at www.communities.gov.uk.

The Framework for Partnership draws on research and on the consultation responses. It contains examples of effective practice, practical suggestions for communities and local authorities and links to further sources of support and guidance.

The Framework for Partnership is structured around four building blocks:

- Developing the confidence and skills to 'bridge' and 'link'
- Shared spaces for interaction
- Structures and processes which support dialogue and social action
- Opportunities for learning which build understanding.

These building blocks have been developed both in the light of consultation responses and building on independent research into faith communities and the development of bridging social capital, i.e. the ability of individuals and groups to form connections with people they perceive as different from themselves. We believe that these represent the key enabling factors for effective dialogue and social action involving people with different faiths and beliefs and those with none.

The practical steps that government will take to support the delivery of the Framework for Partnership include:

- **A three year programme of investment and support worth over £7.5m.** This will be invested with a focus on delivering increased opportunities for dialogue and social action within local communities and we will be targeting our support through:
 - a new local **Faiths in Action** fund. This aims to support local activities and initiatives that have a direct link to one or more of the four building blocks. It will be open for all types of organisations at national, regional or local level in England
 - a programme of investment over three years in **Regional Faith Forums** to support and build their capacity in particular their interaction with local inter faith activity
- Producing a **guide for local communities** which shows ways in which individuals and groups can become involved in dialogue and social action involving people with different faiths and beliefs and those with none
- Providing **supportive guidance to local authorities** within the **Cohesion Delivery Framework** on the practical steps they can take to support dialogue and social action at the local level. This will incorporate the ideas for local authorities set out within each of the four building blocks within this Framework
- Signposting local authorities and their partners to **effective practice, resources and guidance** via the web
- Working in partnership with the Inter Faith Network for the UK to support an Inter Faith Week. This will encourage communities at national, regional and local levels to hold events to celebrate and raise awareness of the positive inter faith work that is being undertaken everywhere. The aim of the week will be for people and organisations to use a variety of mediums to:
 - celebrate existing relationships and ways of working
 - create new opportunities to build relationships
 - showcase innovation.



- Organising a **national conference** to support networking and promoting effective practice in relation to each of the four building blocks
- Supporting the development of web based resources for people to make connections with each other and get ideas for activities which support the four building blocks
- Supporting the development of **regional Faith Links** (regional hubs for Local Authority Faith Leads) within each of the English regions by 2011. Faith Links will be coordinated by Government Offices and will provide Local Authority Faith Leads with guidance, support and networking opportunities. This will include the production of a **toolkit** which builds upon learning from successful approaches led by the Government Offices in London and Yorkshire and the Humber
- Supporting improved links with third sector structures and access to VCS resources through the publication of ***Believing in Local Action*** – case studies showing good practice developed with the Church Urban Fund and NAVCA
- Working with the Local Government Association, IDeA, the Inter Faith Network for the UK, the Faith Based Regeneration Network and the Community Development Foundation to update the existing ***Faith and Community guidance for local authorities***
- Work with faith communities, the Local Government Association and Charity Commission, to produce a standardised version of a **charter for excellence in public service delivery by faith communities**, building on existing models.