

Faith Guiding in Birmingham

The Context – where did we start ?

1. The multi faith city of Birmingham
2. People of all faiths with experience of inter faith work – formed multi faith Steering Group to organise a new venture called Faith Encounter Programme (FEP), Sept 2006
3. A grant from a local charitable trust of £15,000, for educational work
4. Belief that faith communities have an important contribution to make to the wider society, including countering extremism, but they need support to enable them to fulfil this role.
5. Availability of a person with time and expertise

The Vision – what is needed ?

1. Faith Communities

- a) To develop the ability of faith communities to present themselves with confidence, integrity, sensitivity and realism.
- b) To show that all the faith communities, especially Islam, have a **positive** contribution to make to society as a whole.
- c) To address the misconceptions and misunderstandings in the minds of many people about religion and faith communities.

2. Religious Education

To improve the quality of group visits to places of worship i.e. churches, mosques, gurdwaras, temples, viharas and synagogues in Birmingham; especially by school groups as part of their statutory religious education programme.

3. Faith Literacy

To be able to offer faith literacy programmes for the staff of public bodies (including businesses, local authorities, the media, schools and colleges) – in line with Government policy.

Management

Faith Encounter Programme is a registered charity (no. 112 4521). The self employed Co-ordinator is responsible to the multi faith Steering Group, which is chaired by the Revd Dr Toby Howarth, Inter Faith Adviser to the Anglican bishop of Birmingham. Other members of the Steering Group include a Faith Guide and a Tutor, and all are appointed for their educational and inter faith experience. The Steering Group includes the three trustees of the charity.

Faith Guiding Course

Underlying concept: Faith + Tour Guiding = Faith Guiding

Partnership: between FEP, Institute of Tourist Guiding (guiding skills and accreditation), West Midlands Faiths Forum and Queensbridge School (venue).

Purpose: to train volunteers to offer higher quality educational visits to their own places of worship, for both adult and school groups.

Ethos: committed openness, recognition of diversity of interpretations, mutual respect.

Accreditation: Institute of Tourist Guiding, Level 2.

Structure: 48 hours class study, 72 hours self study. Includes 2 workshop days, using IT to prepare resource materials, and 4 training visits to places of worship.

Students: First course - 4 Sikhs, 4 Hindus, 2 Buddhists, 2 Christians, 1 Muslim, 1 Jain and 1 Unitarian.

Tutorial team: 7 Faith Tutors (one for each faith), 2 Guiding Skills Tutors, 2 Inter Faith Tutors. All highly qualified and paid.

Assessment: 1 hour written examination, short assessed guided tour at place of worship.

Support

Financial support has been received from:

Allan and Nesta Ferguson Trust

Spalding Trust

St Peter's Saltley Trust

Church and Community Fund

Connecting Communities Plus (Dept of Communities and Local Government)

Islamic Relief

Roger Hooker Memorial Trust

Methodist Church Fund for Racial Justice

Birmingham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Support has also been received from University College Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain College, Queensbridge School and Guru Nishkam Sewak Jatha (Sikh Gurdwara).

Outcomes

1. 15 trained Faith Guides, able to deliver high quality group visits to their own place of worship. They learnt from each other through studying together as a multi faith group.
2. Faith Guides able to interpret their faith with sensitivity to people of different ages and backgrounds, including those of no faith.
3. Faith Guides able to produce appropriate resource material and efficiently administer a programme of educational visits.
4. Places of worship in the city better able to present their faith and community life to visitors.
5. Faith Guides acting as a resource for Faith Literacy Programmes organised by the Faith Encounter Programme and other bodies.
6. RE teachers are able to access more appropriate educational visits for school groups.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Faith Guides completed evaluation forms, the results of which were fed into a staff meeting of Tutors, which reviewed the first course.

Dr Ian Jones, Director of the Saltley Trust and Vice Chair of the Steering Group, monitored the learning experience of the Faith Guides, as well as acting as one of the examiners for the course, and his detailed report is available.

Future plans

1. Second Faith Guiding course January - April 2009.
2. Further Faith Literacy Programmes, tailor made for both urban and rural groups.
3. Working with SACRE, new Birmingham syllabus about learning from people of faith.
4. New partnerships and development in other centres e.g. London, Leicester, Wolverhampton.

Ruth Tetlow

November 2008

**Churches Tourism Association
Swanwick Convention November 2008**

Workshop: Faith Guiding in Birmingham

1. Introductions

2. Two introductory exercises to give a flavour of the Faith Guiding Course:

1. Listening. (from 'Mad Hatter's Tea Party')

With a partner, speak for one minute, while the other person listens without interruption, and then swap over.

a) about something that has made you happy recently

b) about how you sustain yourself in difficult times OR

what is of central importance to you about your faith ?

2. Sharing with a partner of a different faith tradition for 3 minutes:

'How is your faith tradition expressed in your way of life ?'

Listen and then swap over.

3. Faith Guiding in Birmingham

Handout

Display of photographs

General FEP leaflet

Course leaflet

Central mosque leaflet

4. Discussion

What lessons can be learned for our situation ?