



Civil Renewal Research Programme

Faith, hope and clarity: Developing a model of faith group involvement in civil renewal

Main report

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1. Introduction

1.1 Statements from the UK Home Office on civil renewal point to the role of faith groups in building the skills and confidence of their members to play an active role in society (Home Office 2003). UK policy in other areas also identifies a role for faith groups: in service provision (education, housing); governance (at neighbourhood, LSP and regional level); consultation (health and police); and community building (community cohesion, regeneration). Engaging faith groups is part of a broader government strategy to mobilise the resources of civil society in pursuit of citizen well-being and better governance. But there is also an assumption that faith groups have special qualities that enable them to play a particular role in civil renewal.

1.2 This report sets out to uncover the often implicit – and sometimes competing – rationales for faith group involvement in civil renewal. A review of existing research and relevant conceptual developments leads us to identify three distinct rationales for faith group involvement in civil renewal. We term these the **normative**, **resources** and **governance** rationales. The report examines the extent to which current policy and practice reflects the three rationales, drawing upon documentary analysis and interviews with policy-makers and faith group representatives (at the national level and in the city of Leicester). Emerging tensions, as well as potential contributions, are highlighted. The report assesses the relative importance of the three rationales for different stakeholders. In the light of evidence from the primary research, the report proposes a model of faith group involvement that specifies the relationship between the three rationales, their key components in practice, and the challenges they afford to both policy-makers and faith communities themselves. The implications for building institutions for civil renewal are also commented upon. The report finishes by mapping faith involvement in civil renewal, identifying the key players and their roles. A diagnostic tool is developed for use by policy-makers seeking a more strategic approach to faith group involvement.

2. Policy context

2.2 The Home Office defines the aim of its 'civil renewal' policy thus:

Civil renewal is about the development of strong, active, and empowered communities - increasingly capable of doing things for themselves, defining the problems they face, and then tackling them together. Its core values are solidarity, mutuality and democratic self-determination. (Home Office n/d (a))

The policy builds upon traditional Home Office responsibilities for matters of citizenship and the practical business of supporting the voluntary sector. But it also expresses a more ambitious and cross-governmental vision. Three specific goals are identified (Home Office n/d (a)), each of which requires commitment from a range of central government departments and the active cooperation of actors at the regional and local level:

Active citizenship: Citizens will be given more opportunities and support to become actively involved in defining and tackling problems and improving their quality of life (via, for instance, citizenship education in schools and the support of volunteering).

Strengthened communities: Communities will be helped to form and sustain their own organisations, bringing people together to deal with common concerns (via capacity building and community development programmes, and projects to enhance community cohesion).

Partnership in meeting public needs: Public bodies, within the established democratic framework, will seek to involve citizens and communities more effectively in improving the planning and delivery of public services (via a range of citizen participation mechanisms – from consultation to co-governance).

2.3 The clearest statement regarding the role of faith groups in the civil renewal policy programme comes from the former Home Secretary David Blunkett:

The government is involving different faiths so they can each bring their distinctive perspective in helping to meet common needs. I have set up

the Faith Communities Unit (FCU) in the Home Office to promote engagement with faith groups and local leaders who are so important in developing the skills and confidence of their members in play an active role in society. A Steering Group has been looking specifically at how faith groups can have a greater input into policy. (Home Office 2003, 22)

2.4 In 2005, the work of the FCU became part of the remit of a new Race, Equality, Cohesion and Faith Directorate. In the light of recent events, particularly the 7/7 bomb attacks but also the disturbances in Birmingham in October 2005, working with faith groups is particularly associated with strategies to foster community cohesion. There is a close overlap between the aspiration for community cohesion and the goals of civil renewal. As the Home Office website explains:

Multi-cultural communities are often multi-faith communities and this should be fully recognised in policies aimed at promoting diversity. Fostering understanding and respect between different faiths is vital in practically implementing community cohesion strategies. The Home Office aims to help bring about a society in which different belief systems, whether religious or otherwise, are understood, respected and valued... The experience and resources of the faith communities are invaluable and the Home Office strives to ensure that these communities are given the opportunity to participate fully in society through voluntary activity and other faith based projects. (Home Office n/d (b))

2.5 However, as this report argues, the relationship between faith and ethnicity is a complex one: different faiths are practiced within the same ethnic group, and specific faiths have followers of many different ethnicities. People from minority ethnic groups may not see faith as primary to their identification, as is the case for many white British people. In short, community cohesion is a specific (and contested) policy goal that does not, in any necessary way, flow from the involvement of faith groups in civil renewal. (The Race, Equality, Cohesion and Faith Directorate is also concerned with other faith matters not specifically related to civil renewal, including the introduction of the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill and guidance on the prevention of forced marriages.)

2.6 An initial review of policy statements on civil renewal shows that the rationale for faith group involvement is not always explicit or consistent, and varies between policy contexts. Sometimes faith appears to be 'smuggled into' policy discourses without a clear account of the chain of reasoning

involved. Sometimes faith acts as a synonym for race and ethnicity. Existing research suggests that the role of faith groups may be contested among policy-makers, and within and between faith groups themselves (see, for instance, Farnell et al 2003). The 'bottom-up' aspect of faith group involvement is sometimes neglected. Faith groups have their own long-standing and diverse missions regarding community engagement, which may be in tension with those proposed (or assumed) by policy-makers (see Cairns et al 2005; Reith 2003; London Churches Group 2002; Lewis 2001)

3. Research context

3.1 The evidence base on the relationship between faith and civic engagement is limited – and confusing. A link has been established between religious involvement and trust in political institutions, but there is no clear relationship with civic competence (Gabriel 1995). There is also no clear evidence of a link between ‘social capital’ and faith activity. Putnam’s (1993) pioneering study of social capital across the regions of Italy found that the most devout churchgoers were the least civic-minded individuals in surveys carried out over a 20 year period. Putnam came to the conclusion that religious involvement was an alternative to civic engagement rather than a part of it. A sharp contrast is provided by survey evidence from the USA, subsequently analysed by the same author. In his influential book *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) explains that – in the post war period - religious involvement is second only to education as a predictor of civic engagement. A third strand of evidence contradicts both of the previous propositions. The European Values Survey found that, among 29 countries over a 30 year time period, there was no relationship between religiosity and social capital (measured in relation to levels of trust and civic engagement) (Halman and Pettersson, 2001). It seems that intervening variables are important in determining the link with social capital. Three factors are of particular importance: how faith groups are organised; whether they provide members with opportunities to learn civic skills; and whether they have an overt public policy orientation (Verba et al 1995; Lowndes 2004).

3.2 Most research on faith and civic engagement comes from the USA and is concerned only with Christian churches (see Burns et al 2001; Putnam 2000; Verba et al 1995). In Britain, the intersection of secularism and multiculturalism creates a unique context. Christianity is the main religion in Britain (72%); people with no religion make up 15% of the population; 5% of the population belong to a non-Christian denomination (half of whom are Muslims) (ONS 2004). Just 10% of British people attend church regularly and attendance is more common among women and middle class people. However, church attendance is actually growing in some urban areas,

particularly among black Christians. Despite small congregations, the Church of England also remains a focus for community activity within many localities.

3.3 However, the religious make-up of some British cities varies considerably from the national profile: in Leicester, for instance, 45% of people identified themselves as Christian; 15% as Hindu; 11% as Muslim; 17% as having no religion (2001 census, Leicester City Council website). A recent survey in the city uncovered 250 faith groups supporting 450 different social projects (with a response rate of 67%) (Leicester City Council, 2004). In terms of ethnic groups, 26% of the population described themselves as Indian in the 2001 census but there are other significant black and ethnic minority communities too (Pakistani, Caribbean and African, including recently arrived Somali refugees). The relationships between faith and ethnicity is complicated: for instance, the 'Indian' community has Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Jain elements, while the 'Muslim' community includes citizens originally from countries in Asia, Africa and East/Central Europe.

3.4 The Home Office Citizenship Survey highlights the importance of religion as an arena for civic participation and volunteering in Britain. Religion is the 4th most important arena for civic and social participation and formal volunteering; its importance also appears to be growing (Home Office, 2003). A survey conducted in Greater London identified more than 2,000 faith-based social action projects in the city, employing 3,000 people, supported by 13,500 volunteers, with 120,000 beneficiaries. The total figures are likely to be far higher, given that the response rate from worshipping communities was just under 30% (London Churches Group 2002).

4. Rationales for faith group involvement

4.1 How does government policy aim to build upon, and support, this reservoir of active citizenship in pursuit of its civil renewal goals? The diffuse nature of the civil renewal remit – spanning diverse policy arenas and different levels of governance – requires that we consider a wide range of evidence to uncover and assess rationales for faith group involvement. Drawing on existing research, we identify three ‘in principle’ rationales for faith group involvement, which are then examined in the light of documentary and interview evidence:

A **normative rationale** which stresses the role of faith groups in relation to community values and identities, linked both to their ‘theology’ and their enduring presence within communities.

A **resources rationale** which focuses upon the organisational capacity of faith groups (in developing members’ skills, mobilising volunteers, providing staff and venues), and their role in reaching socially excluded groups.

A **governance rationale** which identifies the representative and leadership role of faith groups inside communities and within broader networks and partnerships.

4.2 In the next section we consider the extent to which current policy and practice reflects the three rationales, drawing upon a range of data sources: an analysis of policy documents; a review of existing research; interviews with national-level faith group representatives and with faith leaders in the city of Leicester; and interviews with central government policy-makers (Home Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and local practitioners (Leicester City Council and Leicestershire Constabulary). See Appendix 1 for a list of interviewees and the topic guides. With its ethnically diverse population and strong inter-faith traditions, Leicester is not selected on the grounds of typicality. Rather, it has unique potential as a ‘research laboratory’ in which to test conceptual and practical tools regarding faith and civil renewal. Experiences from Leicester are presented in a series of boxes throughout the report. The boxes are intended to illustrate and contextualise key themes, rather than to represent ‘best practice’ in any generalisable sense.

5. Values-added: the normative rationale in practice

5.1 This rationale is stressed chiefly by faith groups themselves, although there is evidence that policy-makers appreciate that faith-based values and identities can motivate citizens to be involved in their communities. There is also interest among policy-makers in the role of faith groups in 're-moralising' public life, playing a role in identifying and articulating common values as a basis for improved community cohesion at the local level and even a new sense of citizenship and 'Britishness' at the national level (see 8.4). Faith groups were seen by policy-makers as offering a distinctive 'ethical and cultural dimension' vis-à-vis other civil society bodies. Research highlights, however, the potential for negative attributes to emerge – for instance where religious doctrines act as simplification, distortion or controlling devices as opposed to enhancing understanding and facilitating empowerment and clarification (Farnell et al 2003, 14).

5.2 Interviews held with respondents from the Church of England provided evidence of the normative rationale in practice, albeit within a particular faith context. The Commission on Faith and Urban Life emphasises 'human flourishing' as an under-rated goal or element of regeneration activity and urban policy. Respondents argued that capacity building should have a normative as well as a practical dimension, seeking 'a capacity in humankind to be a better self'. Despite the rhetoric of 'sustainable communities', there was a feeling that fundamental questions such as what makes a fulfilling human community were generally avoided by policy-makers – and that faith groups could make an important contribution in addressing such issues. Involvement in civil renewal can be an opportunity for citizens to articulate dimensions of their faith (e.g. sympathy, generosity, resilience - in a Christian context, or 'hospitality' for Sikhs, or the 'struggle to see' for Muslims), and can also be an opportunity for people to learn more about their own 'faith in action'. Several interviewees were keen to stress that this was not the same thing as proselytising – a fact not always understood by critics of government support for faith-based action. Respondents noted that faith involvement in civil renewal often has an 'implicit' as well as explicit dimension. Many 'people of faith' are involved as active citizens and community leaders (and as public

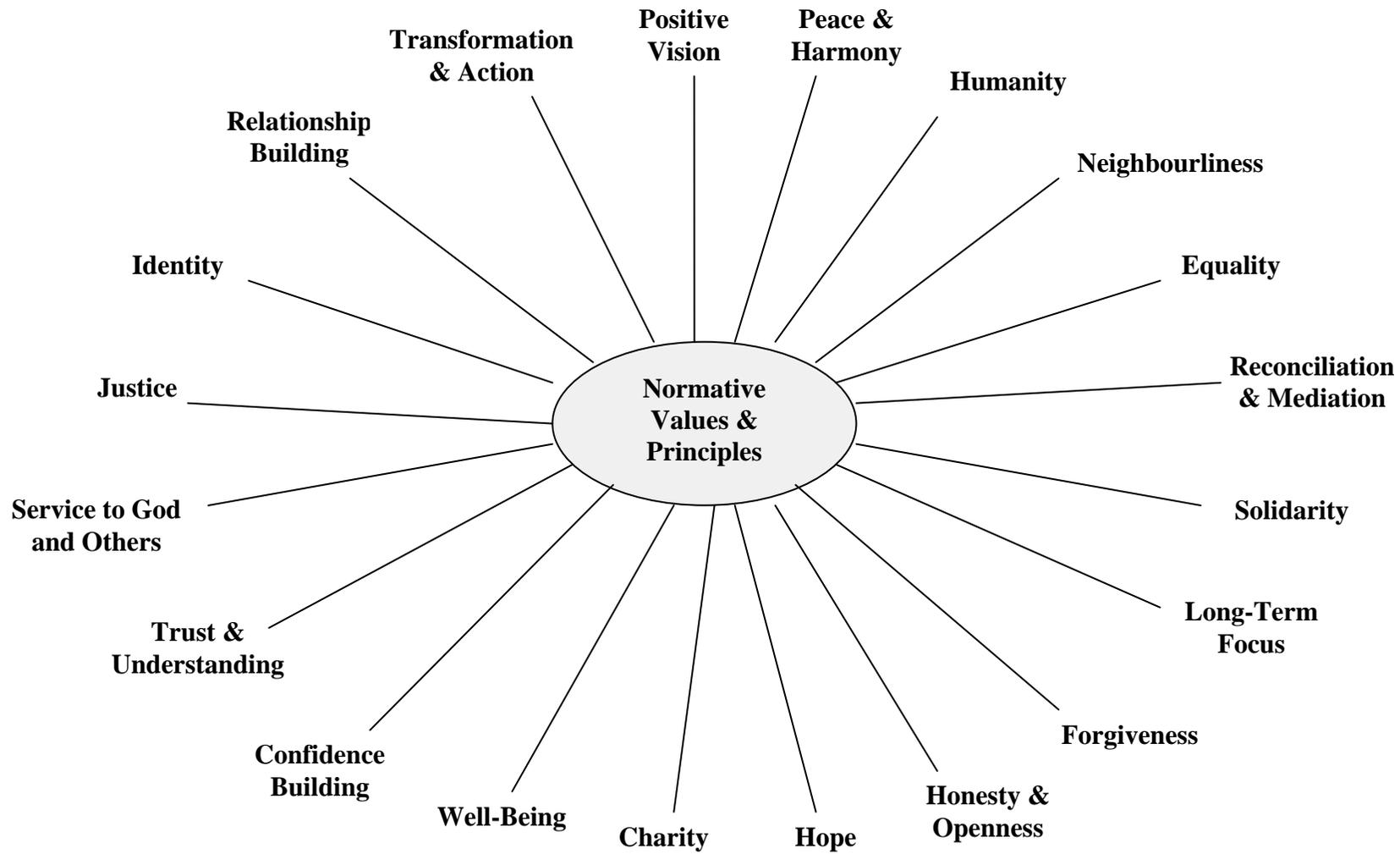
and voluntary sector professionals): their faith shapes their motivation and practice, even if it is not explicit.

5.3 Faith groups may see an important role for ‘prayer’ or ‘grace’ (to take Christian examples) in their community work – these are not cultural ‘add-ons’ but practices aimed at achieving specific ends. It is easy, in this context, to see how communication problems can arise between faith groups and secular policy-makers on the ground. Indeed, there was a certain amount of cynicism among faith group respondents about the attempts of policy-makers (and local practitioners) to hijack the normative agenda – for instance, claiming ‘grass roots legitimacy’ on the basis of faith group involvement, without actually engaging with the values and practices of those groups. A yet more hostile reaction argued that: ‘The government doesn’t want to hear about what makes us faithful people. They’ll fund us if we don’t do anything religious with the money’. The London Churches Group (2002, 20) observed that local government officers were often cautious about engaging with faith groups due to concerns that they would use funding for evangelism or proselytising.

5.4 On a different tack, some faith group representatives expressed concerns that involvement with funded community projects could ‘corrupt’ people of faith, distracting them from more fundamental goals. Indeed, the London Churches Group (2002, 20) acknowledges that some faith groups may not regard community work as within their ‘calling’. A report looking at the contribution of the Diocese of Birmingham to urban regeneration commented on the tension encountered at parish level between ‘business decisions and Jesus decisions’ (Cairns et al 2005, 50).

5.5 As already noted, normative values and principles are key factors shaping and motivating faith group action and involvement in communities. Figure 1 specifies the values associated with faith involvement in civil renewal, as they have were presented to us by leaders and representatives of the major faiths. These are values shared by the different faiths, although specific elements may be more or less stressed by particular groups.

Figure 1: What are the values behind faith group involvement?



5.6 But what is special about the normative stance of faith groups? How is different from that of other civil society organisations? Three factors are of particular importance: the holistic commitments of faith groups; their embedded identities in communities and over time; and their diversity.

5.7 Holistic commitments: Cairns et al (2005, 3) note the importance of the faith 'mission' of 'demonstrating and sharing God's love in the community', of service to local people and of meeting needs as a powerful motivating force for volunteers and action. The London Churches Group (2002, 4) also cites the view that: "Our service to others is our service to God". The report argues that: "Social action is a fundamental part of the practice of many faiths because the requirement to serve people in need is central to the teaching of most faiths" (2002, 6). In a general sense, faith group involvement may be associated with a sense of hope and a belief in positive change, allied with a clear vision of a better future (Lewis 2001, 4).

5.8 Faith groups can play an important role in building relationships between active worshipers, the wider community and local organisations (Cairns et al 2005 43ff). Reith (2003, 7) links faith group values to their potential to foster relationships, provide space for people to meet and develop informal networks of mutual support and self-help. Reith (2003, 12) argues that the "distinctive values of faith groups also means that they often develop innovative strategies to tackle long-running problems, making them key partners in policy innovation". Because practical work in the community and religious worship are seen as integrated rather than distinct activities, faith groups may see civil renewal in more holistic terms than secular agencies. They may also be able to develop more flexible and personalised responses to social need than agencies bound by a contract to provide a tightly specified service (Cairns et al 2005, 55).

5.9 Faith groups can be described as having a 'holistic' approach because they are, in principle, concerned with whole communities (of a particular faith) rather than specific interest groups or segments within that community. Faith groups aim to include and be of service to people within their community of all

ages, social classes and ideological persuasions. Indeed, as our interviewees often pointed out, significant events throughout the life course are often marked by faith involvement - birth, transition to adulthood, marriage and death. Faith groups are concerned with the wellbeing of the community in a general sense: they are not formed to address a single issue or cause. The holistic perspective of faith groups underpins their potential to provide a uniquely 'joined up' contribution to civil renewal goals.

5.10 Embedded identities: Faith groups are often able to offer a long-term local commitment, perspective and presence. This is seen as stemming from the centrality and continuation of worship within community life (Farnell et al 2003, 41). The associated degree of stability is reflected in a desire to be part of solutions that address root causes of social problems rather than just the symptoms. Reith (2003, 10) points out that faith groups will be engaged in their local area long after short and medium term regeneration initiatives and/or funding cycles have finished, and can therefore add value to shorter-term initiatives. Because of these features, faith groups are well placed to develop values of community commitment and ownership and to develop wider civic engagement (Lewis 2001, 4). Tensions can arise, however, between the long and short term perspectives of faith groups and policy-makers respectively. Faith groups may offer a 'valuable corrective' to output-oriented policy programmes that underestimate the time it takes to build trust and personal relationships (Community Cohesion Panel 2004, 32). This difference in perspectives can lead to tensions within partnership arrangements. Research on urban regeneration field found that faith groups were highly critical of government programmes, which they saw as being:

too complex; too centrally controlled and ill-attuned to specific local issues; too bureaucratic; not sufficiently holistic and interconnected; and in many cases, ineffective, producing a collective sense that money is spend but 'nothing much changes here'. (JRF 2003, 4).

5.11 Diversity: Faith groups emphasise their own diverse and distinctive identities. The equality of each individual is also a key tenet of most world religions. Acknowledging the role of faith groups in neighbourhood life and public policy can be a way of validating, even celebrating, the diversity of communities (Reith 2003, 7). But this relies upon respecting the distinctive

identities of faith groups (and their internal diversity), and resisting the temptation to ‘homogenise’ a faith sector within policy discourse – or assume that different faith groups can easily ‘pool’ their distinctive normative resources. The potential for faith groups to act as ‘mediating structures’ in promoting cross-cultural contact (Reith 2003, 6) is discussed further in Section 8.

5.12 An explicit link can be drawn between faith group involvement and the wider promotion of diversity:

Current Government policies highlight the need to incorporate the diversity of society into the mainstream. Faith communities represent a significant element of diversity – both by virtue of straightforward variety of faiths and because of the overlap between faith and ethnic or cultural identity. The frequent ‘invisibility of faith communities in public life is a barrier to achieving this aim” (DETR, 2000, cited in NDC report, p6)

5.13 Involving faith groups in civil renewal brings with it an explicit debate about values – and the possibility (even likelihood) of value conflict. Such debates may challenge policy-makers and practitioners because they surface values that are usually submerged for political reasons (e.g. the redistributive aspects of some government policy), or because they involve a direct challenge to public policy norms (from equal opportunities to short-term target-driven funding). Policy-makers and practitioners may also be uncomfortable with discussing some values head-on, especially where reference is made to religion. Drawing on experiences in Leicester, Box 1 shows the centrality of normative issues are in identifying what’s ‘special’ about faith groups vis-à-vis other civil society groups.

Box 1: What's Special about Faith Groups?

Interviewees highlighted numerous qualities of faith groups as they apply to civil renewal. From a normative dimension, worship and commitment to a higher spiritual being can, along with principles and teachings on harmony, strong communities, neighbourliness, equality, humanity, justice and solidarity, motivate civic engagement and renewal among faith communities. The long-term holistic concern of faith groups for the well-being of communities was highlighted, together with their focus on specific issues such as welfare for the poor, excluded and marginalized. Faith groups are also seen to play a key role in mediation and reconciliation at various levels, for example between citizens and statutory agencies, between residents on an estate or within families. According to one local authority interviewee, this role is enhanced by the level of trust faith leaders have within their communities, together with the embedded concern for peace, forgiveness and cohesion.

From a resource dimension, Leicester faith groups are able to draw on human, physical and social capital resources to engage in civil renewal. This includes premises, organisational capabilities and access to communities and networks. As for governance, interviewees highlighted the significance of faith leaders in easing community tensions and encouraging participation in civil renewal. According to one Muslim representative, faith leaders can help build confidence that engaging in civil renewal can make a difference.

There is disagreement among interviewees regarding the extent to which faith groups have special qualities to contribute when compared to secular voluntary and community organisations. On the one hand, several interviewees stated that voluntary and community sector groups can, like faith groups, be highly motivated, committed and value driven. On the other hand, interviewees also pointed to the deep seated spiritual underpinning of faith group values and commitment and suggested that faith groups tend towards a more holistic approach to community life, and as such may compliment voluntary organisations that focus on a particular issue or service. One interviewee from an inter-faith background suggested that faith groups are often suitably placed to engage with 'hard to reach' and vulnerable groups within their communities. That is: "faith based organisations are trusted by people who would not trust, and would not approach, or even think of going to a statutory or another voluntary organisation".

6. Capitalising civil renewal: the resources rationale in practice

6.1 There are two distinct ways of looking at this rationale. From a 'top-down' perspective, the emphasis is upon mobilising the resources of faith groups (staff, volunteers, members, donations, venues) in the service of civil renewal. Sometimes the emphasis is upon practical resources, but it can also be upon 'social capital' – that is, the mobilisation of networks and relationships within communities. Resources of this sort have the potential to create a capacity for collective action (in pursuit of practical social goals) and also a more trustful relationship with policy-makers and practitioners. This perspective is particularly relevant to government strategies to engage with disadvantaged communities that are traditionally 'hard to reach' and appear to (increasingly) look to faith as a source of identity and collective mobilisation.

6.2 From a 'bottom-up' perspective, the focus may be upon the resources that faith groups themselves can access from the state through their engagement with civil renewal (e.g. grants, new buildings, training). Again, such resources may be practical or relationship-based. These different versions of the 'resources' rationale can cause some confusion, even tension, in relationships between faith groups and policy-makers. In which direction should resources be flowing, and with what 'strings attached'?

6.3 There are, of course, significant differences among faith groups in relation to their *existing resources* - crucially between the Church of England and minority faiths. Erroneous assumptions can easily be made: it is important to note that not all faith groups fit a building- or membership-based conception. For 'theological' reasons, some faith groups may accept more readily the principle of a broad community use for their facilities (e.g. the cultural as well as worship role of the temple in Sikh and Hindu communities). Interviewees supported the idea of 'faith awareness training' for policy-makers and practitioners. One government respondent stressed the problem of 'ignorance' on both sides – the ignorance of faith groups about how to deal with government, and the ignorance of government about the character of different faith groups and their beliefs. But real conflicts may also arise when

faith groups are required or asked to accept certain contract or funding clauses. For instance, faith communities may want to employ someone in a community project who is 'of their faith', which may raise serious questions about equal opportunities (see London Churches Group 2002, 20). Boxes 2 and 3 draw on experiences from Leicester to explore the diversity of faith groups in relation to both beliefs and resource base.

Box 2: Faith Group Diversity

Interviewees highlighted significant differences between faith groups regarding their engagement in civil renewal. These may, in part, be explained by variances in outlook, resource capacities and stage of development. According to one local authority interviewee, Muslim groups see their role in civil renewal and regeneration in a moral sense; that is, in terms of justice, law and moral 'rights' and 'wrongs'. The Hindu community, on the other hand, is perceived by the same interviewee to be more concerned with peace, harmony and goodwill, and as such are less involved in the political process than the Muslim or Christian communities. But an interviewee from the Leicester Partnership suggested that this trend appears to be changing: the question of involvement may no longer be a faith issue as people of all faiths are now involved in the political process.

Resource differences are regarded as particularly marked between Christian and non-Christian faiths. The size and length of time a faith community has been established in an area are important determinants of the level and nature of resources. Interviewees suggested that Christian and larger, more established faith groups tend to have greater access to paid workers and physical capital than minority faith groups. This makes it more difficult for non-Christian and smaller faith groups to engage in partnerships, consultations and other civil renewal activities, especially where heavy reliance is placed on a few volunteers with the time, knowledge and skills to engage. Such difficulties can lead to perceptions that smaller faith communities are not listened to as much, or are as influential as larger, better resourced faith groups.

Even where faith groups have access to buildings, not all accept their use for purposes other than worship. As one Muslim interviewee stated, "there are a fair number of mosques around but often sectarian divides and divisions curtail how freely people use various different mosques.....some people have a very traditional notion that a mosque is simply a place of worship and that is it".

Box 3: Smaller Faith Groups

The Bahá'í and Jain communities are involved in activities that seek to strengthen communities and promote active citizens. The Bahá'í faith shares a number of concerns embedded within civil renewal agenda. These include community cohesion, good citizenship and co-operation with others. In Leicester, members of the Bahá'í community run various voluntary projects, including: regular citizenship classes for young people covering issues of humanity, diversity and world citizenship; a local community asylum seekers and refugee project; and a Somali women's group. Such activities provide citizenship education and opportunities for people to mix. They also adopt creative methods, such as drama, music, art and fun days, to help convey important messages around social cohesion, health and other issues. The Jain centre is also a focus of citizenship education where talks are organised and delivered on issues facing the community.

In addition to the above activities, both the Bahá'í and Jain community are represented on the Leicester Council of Faiths as well as other inter-faith collaborations in the locality. These inter-faith collaborations work in partnership with statutory agencies, and as such provide the opportunity for such agencies to engage faith communities in improving the planning and delivery of public services. Together with individual faith group participation in statutory consultations, these mechanisms provide a means by which faith groups help strengthen the voice of citizens and communities in the policy process.

Both the Bahá'í and Jain community in Leicester are keen to expand their activities in these areas, but would require additional resources to do so. However, as with other faith groups, Bahá'í and Jain interviewees highlighted difficulties in accessing public funding for non-religious, community based projects. There is a perception that faith groups are discriminated against because of their faith or, more specifically, because of fears that money will be used to promote religious activities. According to one faith group interviewee: "there is no recognition in terms of any funding availability because they treat us as a religious group and not a 'community'. But we are, in effect, doing community work as well, but not being recognised in that way". Members of the Bahá'í community feel that their funding difficulties partly reflect poor understanding by some statutory officials of their intentions, activities and faith.

6.4 The resources rationale is emphasised by those who see faith groups as a 'distinctive part of the voluntary sector', stressing their role as civil society bodies able to work in partnership with government. The ODPM respondents felt that there were benefits for faith groups in aligning themselves more closely with the rest of the voluntary and community sector – this would enable them to become more visible and get access to more resources. The Church of England was described as 'the biggest voluntary sector organisation in the country' – with a presence from the House of Lords down to every parish in the country. There was some cynicism from the faith groups themselves that they were sometimes used as 'a cheap way into anywhere' – an instrumental approach to gaining access to communities and community resources. Government respondents recognised that faith groups were wary of the prospect of co-option, and were best regarded as 'critical friends' and partners on their own terms.

6.5 Policy-makers certainly recognise that the 'resources' rationale can lead to cynicism among faith groups: 'it is important that we don't just go to them when we need them'. But resources provide an important focus for dialogue between policy-makers and faith groups, given the potential benefits to both 'sides'. Regional Development Agencies in several regions (including London) have undertaken mapping exercises to establish the number of faith-related community projects and volunteers. There is also a Church of England-led project underway to establish a 'community value formula' that would allow faith groups to calculate their input to communities beyond worship (including, for instance, volunteer hours).

6.6 Home Office respondents with a specific remit for working with Muslim communities were concerned to stress how *few* resources some local faith groups had access to. Farnell et al (2003, 40) comment on the 'significant inequalities between faiths in their present ability to engage'. Faith groups may actually be a *potential* route to engagement in civil renewal, but one which requires the injection of resources and capacity building to be effective. An example was provided of a Learning and Skills Council-funded project to train 120 imams in leadership and management. The importance of

supporting faith-led training and capacity building was emphasised by some respondents, as was the role of 'brokerage' bodies like the Faith Based Regeneration Network or Faithworks which could mediate between faith groups and policy-makers. Such arrangements seek to overcome typical communication problems between faith groups and statutory bodies, involving: the lack of material translated into non-English languages; the use of jargon and technical concepts; over-reliance on written communication; and insufficient resources to support outreach workers in the long-term task of building deep knowledge of communities and building trust (see Farnell et al, 2003, 24).

6.7 The newly established Faith and Cohesion Unit in the Home Office is in the process of setting up two funds to support faith groups. The 'capacity building' fund will support faith groups to better represent their interests (beyond worship), with a focus on leadership training, understandings of citizenship, and community involvement. The 'faith in the community' fund will support inter-faith activity aimed at promoting integration. The Community Development Foundation (a non-governmental organisation) will be responsible for carrying out a needs' analysis and subsequently administering the funds.

6.8 It is helpful to specify the three different types of resources implicated in this rationale for faith group involvement: human capital; social capital and physical capital.

6.9 **Human capital:** Faith groups contribute both a leadership and management capacity and their members exhibit a particular willingness to volunteer and contribute free time (Farnell et al, 2003, 7, 22; LGA 2002, 7). Reith (2003, 10) argues that faith can be "an incredibly powerful source of motivation that engages individuals in services and volunteering". Clergy themselves play important practical roles within civil renewal and urban regeneration projects (in representing communities and providing administrative support for faith group involvement), while also mobilising volunteers and 'leading by example' (Cairns et al 2005, 4). Staff and volunteers from a faith group background are not just 'extra bodies', they bring

with them distinctive expertise. They have an in-depth and historical knowledge of the community (particularly valuable in relation to hard-to-reach groups), and a special capacity to offer a holistic view of renewal (Reith 2003, 10; JRF 2003, 1; Lewis 2001, 4). Some faith groups have developed skills and experience in delivering training for community activists (LGA 2002, 5, 14). Research suggests that faith groups and their members may also bring a strong sense of independence to the partnership table that demands active engagement rather than passive involvement (Farnell et al 2003, 9). The pressures upon volunteers from faith groups are, however, the same as those for secular volunteers, for example time, skills, experience, confidence. Like other community-based organisations, faith groups report difficulties in attracting volunteers, particularly into leadership roles (Cairns 2005, 33-4). The age profile of many volunteers also leads faith groups to express concern about the sustainability of their human capital resources over the long term (Farnell et al 2003, 41, 23; Cairns et al 2005, 18).

6.10 Social capital: Faith groups may have a degree of credibility that many service providers do not have because they are regarded as part of the community in contrast to public sector professionals who are ‘parachuted’ in (Reith 2003, 9-10). They can provide access to social capital within a community – that is, networks of trust and reciprocity. Faith groups may ‘offer a channel to some of the hardest-to-reach groups’ (SEU 2001), particularly where faith and ethnicity are closely linked. Faith groups are also important arenas, especially in black communities, for making contact with young people. Research on urban regeneration initiatives confirms the role of faith groups in accessing social capital among disadvantaged and socially excluded groups, including some minority ethnic communities (Farnell et al, 2003, 7; Northwest Development Agency, 2003, 6, 4). The *way in which* networks are mobilised may also be distinctive: Lewis (p5 and 9) highlights the potential for faith communities to adopt a ‘bottom-up’ approach by involving and empowering local people and ensuring genuine participation e.g. by helping them to develop a sense of local identity and pride, promoting self-sufficiency and helping them establish a common vision. Farnell et al (2003, 42) make a similar point, arguing that: “the close local involvement of faith communities, characterised, at its best, by careful listening to socially

excluded people, offers a significant 'grassroots' voice to inform and correct 'top-down' policies".

6.11 Physical capital: Faith groups may have physical capital resources that can be utilised as part of their participation in the policy process. In some cases they may have the only building in a neighbourhood that is available for wide community use (See Farnell et al 2003, 21-22; London Churches Group 2002, 14, 19). Cairns et al (2005, 26-27) note that faith groups may be keen to ensure buildings are well used and may allow other groups to use them. Although the same research suggests that potential users do not always feel comfortable in buildings that have a religious as well as secular use (Cairns et al 2005, 19). It is also the case that Christian groups are much more likely to have buildings than other faith communities (London Churches Group 2002, 14). When asked about future policy directions, a respondent from the Church of England argued passionately for assistance with 'heating churches' (and other faith buildings), given their unique role as community spaces. As a government evaluation points out: 'Many of the physical resources, namely faith community buildings, have the potential for providing community spaces for many neighbourhood renewal initiatives. However, many of these buildings require renovation and adaptation to realise this potential' (NDC 2005, 50). Faith groups may even come to regard such resources as burdens rather than assets, given the costs incurred in relation to maintenance and restoration (Farnell et al 2003, 22).

7. Representation and leadership: the governance rationale in practice

7.1 The Home Office (2003, 22) argues that the leadership role of faith groups involves developing the skills and confidence of members to play an active role in society, fighting discrimination, and promoting understanding of different communities. The governance rationale was stressed particularly by respondents from the Home Office who were working on engaging Muslim groups in civil renewal. Community involvement was seen as vital to tackling the problems of multiple disadvantage, which afflict many Muslim communities. It was argued that in localities with good systems of community involvement and devolved governance, there is less community tension (see Box 4). The difference between 'representation' and 'involvement' was highlighted. An imam sitting on a local partnership was not enough: 'it's good but it needs to be backed up' by capacity building and more active citizens. It is also important to understand *who* 'representatives' actually represent. For instance, specific strategies may be needed to seek the views and interests of Muslim women (an example was provided of focus group work with mothers that had highlighted issues of health, education and housing).

Box 4: Faith and Safer Communities

The Federation of Muslim Organisations in Leicester is an umbrella organisation with 94 affiliated mosques. The Federation's police liaison officer claimed that there is 'a unique relationship in Leicester where the Constabulary and the Muslim community work very closely on security matters'. Informal contact is as important as formal mechanisms (like the Police Advisory Group on Racial Incidents). The liaison officer explained that, on culturally sensitive operations (whether in relation to terrorism or criminal activity more generally), he generally receives a personal briefing from the police. On the basis of this, he speaks to committee members of the relevant mosques, seeking to maximise positive channels of communication with the community.

A Church of England vicar also commented on the 'outstanding efforts to work with faith communities and to build up trust' on the part of the police. The Chief Constable is regularly involved in discussions at the Faith Leaders' Forum (an informal group convened by the Bishop of Leicester). In cooperation with the police and the Crime and Disorder Partnership, the Church of England runs a 'street pastors' scheme in Leicester, offering support and informal counselling on Friday nights to clubbers and people on the street. This work has a clear link to government policy on reducing binge drinking and anti-social behaviour and promoting 'respect'.

Officers in the Leicestershire Constabulary Community Safety Bureau stressed the importance of faith groups as 'an avenue for liaison', which could help 'legitimise your standing' within the community. Confirming the importance of informal relationships, they stressed the role of faith leaders in representing communities beyond the religious arena. Officers do not underestimate the degree of mistrust that remains within some communities, seeing faith leaders as important 'mediators' in this context (giving the example of recent conflict between Sikh and Muslim students in the city).

7.2 The idea of training and capacity building was linked to the governance as well as the resources rationale. For faith groups to play a role in developing active citizens and community leaders, they themselves need to develop their governance structures and skills. An example was provided in the interviews from Blackburn with Darwin Borough Council where assistance had been provided to facilitate the affiliation of all local mosques to the central mosque, which then provided an effective hub for capacity building. The central mosque specifically excluded extremists and political energies were focused upon local governance structures (in contrast to some other Northern towns).

7.3 A Home Office respondent pointed to evidence that other minority faiths (Jews, Sikhs and Hindus) had long recognised the importance of involvement in governance for the health of their communities. The Home Office stressed the importance of working with faith groups at the local level to facilitate involvement in school governing bodies, area forums, and so on. The aim is to work with Muslim groups to overcome the 'governance deficit' that exists in some communities. Given the demise of many forms of traditional politics (e.g. membership of political parties), there is clearly a 'space to be filled' by citizens who become active through the faith route. As the government has pointed out, in some localities places of worship are the only organisation able to reflect the views of particular ethnic groups (ODPM NRU 2004, 1). Inter-faith networks also provide opportunities for representation: such bodies often play a formal role in advising elected local councils and act as a focus for deputations to other local organisations (LGA 2002, 24).

7.4 Faith group respondents stressed the importance of their leadership role at the very local level, highlighting the scope for them to contribute to governance arrangements at the neighbourhood or parish level (preferably feeding into local authority-wide Local Strategic Partnerships). In their report on the Diocese of Birmingham, Cairns et al (2005, 55) point to the facilitating role played by clergy in encouraging participation: 'their privileged access to individuals within the Church and the parish provides them with opportunities not necessarily available to secular agencies to match skills and needs of worshipers with opportunities for volunteering and participation in projects'.

7.5 However, faith group respondents reported some hostility from local authority level policy-makers to faith group involvement in governance. (There was general scepticism regarding governance opportunities at the regional level – although 'faith' representatives do sit on many of the non-elected regional assemblies.) An ODPM respondent linked faith group involvement to the 'new localism' in public policy, while a Church of England informant talked about the 'outgrowing of commitment from the parish to the locality'. In Leicester (like many other cities) there is a 'faith sector' representative on the multi-agency Local Strategic Partnership, who had recently initiated a series of open meetings with faith groups in recognition of

associated communication problems. There had been some difficulty reporting information back to the diverse population of faith groups in the city, and ensuring that faith groups' issues got onto the LSP agenda. Looking at the Leicester experience in more detail, Box 5 explores the strengths and weaknesses of the 'faith sector' concept.

Box 5: A Faith Sector?

Faith leaders in Leicester are broadly supportive of the concept of a 'faith sector' based upon shared values. As a Church of England representative put it: there is 'a cohesiveness of perspective within faith communities', characterised by 'a broader and longer term perspective'. A Muslim representative explained that: 'all faiths have some sort of teachings around justice, around equality, around human beings being part of a broader family that needs to come together'. Those committed to inter-faith working emphasised the collective power of shared spirituality. Describing the changing make-up of the area in which he lived, a vicar argued that: 'through the Muslim presence in particular, and the Hindu presence, there's more prayers said in this parish that even in its history... The Muslims call people to prayer, I can hear it in my garden, and people are praying. Can it not encourage me rather than make me afraid?'

Faith leaders recognise the diversity of views held among faith groups in the city. There are different perspectives *within* the major faiths too, as articulated - for instance - by representatives of different mosques in the city. Even the Church of England can't always come up with 'a line', as a representative found out when asked for a 'Christian perspective' on the possible staging of *Jerry Springer the Musical*. Some faith leaders sought to distinguish between the 'mainstream' faiths that legitimately made up a faith sector and smaller religious groups (like the Zooastrians). Others felt that there should be scope for all religious people to feel part of such a sector, emphasising that very small faith communities could have a significant impact in relation to civil renewal (e.g. Quakers and Bahá'í). 7/7 and other recent events have increased awareness of the need to map the full range of faith based activity - and for leaders not to assume they know what goes on in 'their community'. As one interviewee put it: 'sometimes things that are not mainstream can have great influence either positively or negatively'.

Those less supportive of the idea of a faith sector emphasise that people of faith are part of the wider community, and should not be consigned to a single 'seat' at the table. A Leicester City Council representative argued that, in their civil renewal activities, faith groups should be seen as part of the wider voluntary and community sector. A Muslim leader suggested that, while a faith sector did seem to be emerging in the city (as inter-faith cooperation increased), this shouldn't *limit* the identities and involvement of specific faith groups. As he explained: 'At some time in the future you may well have something that's a faith sector, where people who believe in a higher spiritual being can come together... It's not that they will always be defined by that. They can come on and get off depending on what the issue is'.

7.6 Government interviewees pointed to the relative ease with which they could liaise with the Church of England given its existing governance infrastructure (from parish to synod level and via special bodies such as the Church Committee on Criminal Justice). In Leicester, the Bishop and his officers had been urged by other faith groups to use the leverage and resources of the Church of England to represent faith interests in general, in the context of a secular polity. It was argued that the Church of England could provide a 'gateway to structures' for all faith groups. Several respondents stressed the importance of understanding the different governance structures of faith groups themselves. It is easy to make assumptions about leadership, representation, accountability and membership that are unlikely to apply across all religions. In this context, an ODPM respondent emphasised the need for faith group involvement in governance to be mediated by the wider voluntary and community sector.

Our case study research suggested, however, that tensions can arise between the particular normative stance of faith groups (see Section 5) and the secular, expert/specialist orientation of many voluntary organisations. Box 6 discusses leadership practices and dilemmas among faith groups in Leicester.

Box 6: Faith Leadership

The Leicester case study showed how hard it is to generalise about faith leadership - even in one city. The Church of England has salaried clergy (from the local vicar to the Bishop) and a separate lay structure. Hindus and Sikhs have elected temple committees and do not see their 'priests' as having a leadership role. Buddhists see 'leadership by example' as a personal responsibility. The Bahá'í have an assembly of nine elected members to administer the affairs of the community. In every faith group there is formal and informal leadership. While there is no formal 'priest class' in Islam, the imam's words at Friday prayers could have a major impact on community feeling. There are also contrasting interpretations of the community leadership role *within* different faiths. A Muslim interviewee explained that, for some, 'the mosque is a place of worship - you go there to pray, then you come out again, you don't really do anything else'. For others in the community, there is a desire to recapture the traditional idea of the mosque as 'a centre around which the community can rally'.

Across the different faiths, people told us about the 'untapped voices and minorities' - young people and women were mentioned most frequently. In Leicester it is considered important to involve a range of faith bodies within a particular community: for example, the local branch of the Islamic Society of Great Britain is perceived as a good avenue for accessing women's views (in comparison with some other local Muslim organisations).

Some people questioned the 'representativeness' of faith leaders. Common to all civil society settings, people expressed anxiety about the role of 'self-appointed' leaders, who lacked 'a following' or were 'out of touch with the grass roots' - but appeared at every meeting! Among minority faiths there is a feeling that the media and policy-makers sometimes gravitated towards 'leaders' who were articulate and well-networked within city elites, but not necessarily embedded in the local community.

There are some tensions over leadership within inter-faith settings, arising from different traditions and practices. For example, some people felt that the 'professional' Church of England representatives (clergy) were not really community leaders, in the sense of being selected from within the community and accountable to it. At the same time it was pointed out that Hindu leaders were almost exclusively from the Brahmin caste.

The dilemmas of faith group leadership - selection, accountability, representativeness - are common across all faiths (although manifested differently). Interviewees accepted that it could be difficult for policy-makers to identify appropriate spokespeople in the faith sector. A leading Muslim figure put the issue like this: 'It is a dilemma for government... Who do you speak to and how do you ascertain that they're an authentic voice of the community? Maybe it's just about speaking to lots of different people rather than trying to speak to one person only'.

8. Integration: a fourth rationale?

8.1 The research raised the possibility of an additional rationale for faith group involvement in civil renewal: an integrative rationale. ('Integration' is undoubtedly a contentious term, but it was the one used by interviewees themselves in this context.) The research revealed two separate but linked elements within this debate. The first element relates to policies to promote **community cohesion**, in the wake of riots in several towns in Northern England in 2001, and the subsequent recommendations of the Cantle Report (Home Office 2001). This policy programme seeks to catalyse inter-faith activity at the local level, as part of a strategy to reduce the distance between the 'parallel lives' lived by different communities. The aim is for communities to 'know each other' in a way that has not happened in some areas over the last 30 years (see Cantle 2005 for a review of progress of since 2001). There is also a 'diplomatic' stream of work at the national level, which brings together the leaders of different faiths on a formal basis, via the Inner Cities Religious Council (convened by ODPM) and the Inter-Faith Network (core funded by the Home Office), and through informal dialogue (including high level government involvement). Initiatives in this area range from bringing Jewish and Muslim children together to play football at Arsenal FC, to establishing an informal network of leading imams and rabbis at the national level. Box 7 looks at the faith group contribution to promoting community cohesion in Leicester, which is a 'beacon council' in this area.

8.2 Home Office has recently announced a £3 million programme to build leadership in faith groups and develop their capacity to encourage dialogue within communities. There is also a commitment to improve the quality of religious teaching and understanding in schools (Home Office 2005, 44). It is important that policy-makers do not assume the existence of inter-community knowledge or contact, or the skills to undertake a brokerage role in pursuit of cohesion (Angoy 2005, 35). While community well-being and public safety are key goals from a Home Office point of view, the broader aim of the community cohesion policy is a 'better society' bringing benefits to all citizens, not just those from minority ethnic groups (Home Office 2005, 11).

Box 7: Faith Groups and Community Cohesion

Many interviewees commented on the significance of faith groups in building and maintaining community cohesion within the city. Two key dimensions were highlighted. First, faith groups play a key role in building cohesion and strong communities among people of their own faith and culture. They have provided a focal point for strengthening social networks and shared values, building confidence and a sense of belonging in Leicester, helping new-comers settle and empowering communities to help themselves. Examples of activities that have facilitated this include organising social events and building places of worship.

Second, faith groups have made a significant contribution to building cohesion between people of different faiths, cultures and sectors. Key mechanisms for achieving this include:

- The provision of training and education by faith groups on citizenship, leadership and religion
- Formal and informal inter-faith collaboration and networking, e.g. through the Council of Faiths, Inter-Faith dialogue groups and attending ceremonies and places of worship of different faith groups
- Organising and participating in cross-faith/cultural social activities, events and fund raising initiatives, e.g. cultural festivals and football matches
- Fostering inter-cultural contact and leadership skills between young people

Through these mechanisms, faith groups have enhanced community cohesion in Leicester by:

- Reducing fears, ignorance and tension by enhancing knowledge, respect and understanding of different faiths, cultures and traditions
- Providing a source of moral and spiritual leadership that promotes values underpinning cohesive communities and encourages others to engage in activities fostering cohesion. According to one local authority interviewee, "faith group theology fits in perfectly with the idea of community cohesion because all faiths are about bringing people together to understand each other, to be reconciled with each other and to live in peace and harmony"
- Bringing people together from different faiths and cultures, which has helped them develop new contacts and friendships
- Building trust and confidence between people of different faiths enabling joint responses to tackling and preventing tensions and crises
- Providing a 'safe place' to talk about difficult issues
- Facilitating effective communication and good working relationships between faith/community leaders, the police and other statutory services.
- Providing a source of joint leadership and representation that provides two-way communication between faith communities and public services and partnerships
- Building cohesion at the grass-root level through a 'bottom-up' approach. This is seen by several interviewees to be at the heart of building successful community cohesion.

8.3 The potential contribution of faith groups to community cohesion builds upon the resources and governance rationales (the groups can act as mediating structures), but also encompasses normative elements. The Community Cohesion Panel (2004, 32) argues that faith groups can promote the values and virtues that are necessary for cohesive communities, including neighbourliness, care for the weak, civility and mutual respect, and honesty. On the ground, a Leicester youth initiative explicitly seeks to build a 'network of trust' by bringing together 'the faith leaders of the future' (see Box 8).

Guidance to local authorities argues that:

all major faiths promote equality and respect for others as a fundamental value. In most cases, at a personal and community level, this translates into good community relations and integrity in public life. Such values can be a real resource in the practical implementation of community cohesion strategies. (LGA 2002, 21)

Box 8: Involving Young People

Leicester's Inter Cultural Leadership School (ICLS) is a four day residential programme that brings together young people from different faith and ethnic backgrounds. The programme is designed to enhance the skills of a new generation of leaders whose influence generates mutual respect, long-term co-operation and the prevention or resolution of tension between different religions, cultures and communities. The ICLS has been running in Bradford for several years and was first introduced in Leicester in September 2004. It is being run for a second time in 2005 with at least 15 participants aged between eighteen and thirty years. The programme seeks to build mutual understanding, trust and friendship and includes sessions on conflict resolution, inter-faith dialogue, media communications and inter cultural social events.

The establishment of a Young People's Faith Council is also planned in Leicester in November 2005. This seeks to facilitate the deepening of dialogue with, and between young people of all faiths and provide young people with the opportunity to gain and develop leadership skills and experiences.

8.4 Some researchers have cautioned against simplistic assumptions of religion as a basis for social cohesion. Whilst some faith groups may be civically minded, others may define themselves in opposition to secular values and to other religions. They note that religion may be a source of deep social conflict or a means of social retreat (Farnell et al 2003, 9). Lewis (2001, 5) stresses the need for faith groups to work together rather than compete with one another for resources, which may result in creating greater divisions.

8.5 The second element of the integrative rationale relates to **citizenship and 'Britishness'**. Here a role for faith groups is sought in the process of developing a new and more inclusive sense of British citizenship. Faith groups are seen as having the potential to make an important contribution to generating and articulating a set of shared values, in a context which also respects diversity of belief and identity. The Home Office aims to strengthen the capacity of religious leaders to deal with challenges facing their communities, counter divisive and extremist influences and provide role models for young people. Faith groups have the potential to act as spokespersons, e.g. responding to myths, with a view to marginalizing the impact of extremists who stir up hatred (Home Office 2005, 13, 51).

8.6 Legislation has been passed to require ministers of religion applying for entry into the UK to demonstrate acceptable levels of spoken English (Home Office, 2005, 52). Policy discussions about introducing a Citizenship Day (or some celebration of 'rites of passage' in relation to citizenship) are seen as needing to involve faith groups, while not being targeted exclusively as immigrants or minority communities. This new debate about the nature of Britishness is in its early stages and will inevitably be controversial, particularly if it is perceived as constituting a challenge to established principles of multiculturalism (see the contrasting contributions of Cantle 2005, Phillips 2005, Blunkett 2005; Faulkner 2004; Kundhani 2002). Box 9 explores the views of faith groups in Leicester on the future of government policy in this area.

Box 9: Future policy directions?

Faith representatives in Leicester are broadly positive about the government's policy agenda for involving faith groups in civil renewal. They often argued for 'more of the same', praising the new focus on faith but arguing for more resources to support their work. Muslim organisations in particular argued for more assistance in relation to community buildings and financial aid. They feel they have an important role to play in terms of communicating with alienated members of their communities, arguing that local agencies should consult them more - and listen! Faith leaders are divided as to whether their groups should play a greater role in developing and delivering services. Some feel that this is a diversion from the more important goal of becoming 'actual partners with government'.

There is some disappointment at the winding up of the Faith Communities Unit in the Home Office (subsumed into the new Race, Equality, Cohesion and Faith Directorate). It was seen as an important focal point for government policy, with symbolic significance. More 'joined up working' on faith is called for - at both the central and local government levels. Faith leaders detected competition and a lack of coordination between different departments and services.

Several interviewees referred to the dangers of 'favouritism', arguing that agencies must treat different faith groups in an 'even-handed way'. There is a sense among some representatives that recent events have led to an emphasis on working with Muslim groups to the exclusion of other faith bodies. At the same time there is a recognition that faith groups themselves need to continue to improve their networking capacities, with appropriate government support.

The government's present focus on the faith groups' role in promoting community cohesion and a shared sense of citizenship was welcomed by the faith representatives we spoke to. As a Muslim leader explained: 'It's very helpful that government now takes faith seriously. I think this needs to stay on the agenda... I think it means that the Muslim community itself can feel a sense of being British because faith identity and British identity can operate at different levels so there's no contradiction... One's a national identity and one's a value base, a philosophical identity'.

9. A model of faith group involvement: bringing the rationales together

9.1 Faith groups themselves are most keen to emphasise the normative rationale. Among policy-makers, there is more of an emphasis on the 'resources' rationale in the ODPM (linked to the regeneration focus) and on the governance rationale in the Home Office (linked to concerns with civil renewal, but also with community cohesion and even public safety). Speeches during the 2005 general election campaign by the main party leaders on the role of faith in politics and public policy (hosted by the organisation Faithworks) placed different emphasis on the three rationales. The Conservative Party's leader, Michael Howard, stressed the normative rationale, with an emphasis on the contribution of faith groups to values and morality (Howard 2005). Tony Blair's speech focused upon the role of faith groups as partners in the modernisation of the welfare state, revealing a particular interest in the resources rationale (Blair 2005). The Liberal Democrat Party leader, Charles Kennedy, paid more attention to governance, stressing the civic contribution of faith groups in general, and the role of minority faiths in promoting diversity in governance (Kennedy 2005).

9.2 But can the various rationales be regarded as 'additive' (complementary elements of a grand rationale) or as alternative (even competing) theories of change? The research points to the equal importance of the three rationales but the need to clarify the relationship between them. The three rationales can be linked as a series of stages within the process of involving faith groups in civil renewal. There is scope for government and local authority support to faith groups at each of the different stages, with varying implications for institutional design. The model is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: A model of faith group involvement in civil renewal

RATIONALE FOR FAITH GROUP INVOLVEMENT	NORMATIVE	RESOURCES	GOVERNANCE
ELEMENTS OF RATIONALE IN PRACTICE	Holistic commitments Embedded identities Expression of diversity	Physical capital Human capital Social capital	Participation Representation Leadership
CONTRIBUTION TO CIVIL RENEWAL OBJECTIVES	Motivation 'Active citizenship'	Capacity 'Strengthened communities'	Outcome 'Partnership in meeting needs'
SUBSTANTIVE GOAL	Re-moralising public life	Building social capital	Community cohesion, 'Britishness'
CHALLENGES FOR POLICY MAKERS	Religious literacy Intersection with secularism Respecting difference Managing conflict	Mapping diverse endowments Flexible funding Specialist capacity building Avoiding exploitation	Identifying leaders Assessing mandates Multi-channel representation Incentivising involvement
CHALLENGES FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES	Policy literacy Respecting difference Balancing commitments Clarifying values for faith sector	Stewardship of resources Valuing intangible resources Marketing Renewing resource base	Supporting leaders Building a constituency Establishing accountability Developing inter-faith perspectives
INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN	Faith awareness training Informal dialogue/brokerage- Symbol and ceremony Conflict resolution	Capacity building not draining Innovative funding frameworks Community value formula Resource sharing/exchange	Leadership training Internal governance support Inter-faith infrastructure Partnerships and informal dialogue

9.3 The **normative rationale** relates to the **motivation** for faith group involvement in civil renewal. People may be motivated by their ‘theology’ and faith identity to be active citizens and/or community leaders. The distinctiveness of these motivations lies in the holistic nature of faith-based value systems (they are not limited to single issues) and the embeddedness of faith groups within communities (which are sometimes but not always geographically defined). Faith groups express diversity of belief both internally and within inter-faith networks and the wider community. Harnessing and supporting faith-based motivations for engagement can contribute to civil renewal objectives while also expressing the more specific policy goal of re-moralising public life – asserting the importance of debating and celebrating the values that underpin British society (in their common components and diverse manifestations). The specific values associated with faith involvement in civil renewal were set out in Figure 1 (above).

9.4 Policy-makers face the challenge of recognising and respecting faith-based motivations, among the others that exist within communities. Faith awareness programmes are being used to tackle ‘religious illiteracy’ among policy-makers and stimulate an open debate on tensions with the secular tradition. The degree to which faith plays a motivating role differs between, and within, communities. There is a need for civil renewal policies to be adapted accordingly, avoiding blanket assumptions about community identities. Both policy-makers and faith leaders face the challenge of respecting differences between faith groups and of establishing mechanisms for resolving or anticipating conflicts. Symbolic and ceremonial mechanisms are important in this regard (from joint acts of worship to joint press releases in cases of community tension), alongside ongoing dialogue through informal channels as well as formal partnership mechanisms. The value base of inter-faith work requires constant renewal, and faith leaders have to seek the appropriate balance between religious and community-based commitments.

9.5 The **resources rationale** relates to the **capacity** for faith group involvement: resources are what groups need if they are to be involved in civil renewal. Across the board, faith groups are in possession of significant

physical, human and social resources, although the resource profile of different communities varies immensely (carrying with it different opportunities and constraints). Faith groups have been described as ‘a cheap way into anywhere’. In many ways such a description is appropriate: faith groups offer their services for no financial reward and pride themselves on their community networks and access. But the flow of resources needs to be mapped. What do faith groups contribute to the wider community? What *extra* resources do (different) faith groups require to maintain, expand or redirect their work? How can government invest in faith groups as agents of civil renewal without implicating itself in their religious activities? We need to understand the ‘footprint’ of faith in the community, placing a value on intangible as well as physical resources (CULF 2005).

9.6 The contribution of faith communities to building social capital, especially within deprived and marginalised communities, is widely acknowledged. The challenge for policy-makers and faith leaders is the mobilisation of this social capital for the purposes of civil renewal. There is no automatic ‘spill over’ from religious to civic activity; faith may be associated more with bonding than bridging or linking social capital. Getting the structures and processes right is all-important – from specialist capacity building to the support of an inter-faith infrastructure and the design of dialogue opportunities between faith leaders, policy-makers and other community activists.

9.7 The **governance rationale** relates to the **outcome** of faith group involvement. The goal is to engage faith groups in the co-production of services, in policy consultations, and in decision-making partnerships. In these ways faith group involvement helps to plug the ‘governance deficit’, especially in disadvantaged areas. There are important opportunities for using the ‘faith route’ to enable citizen involvement in local-level structures and (in the longer term) facilitate engagement with national-level politics and identities. The policy challenge here concerns negotiating issues of accountability, representation and inclusion – within governance structures that are increasingly characterised by different types of community ‘mandate’. Policy-makers have to compare, weigh and judge messages from these

proliferating channels of representation, and ensure that decisions (and the reasons behind them) are fed back to citizens. Faith groups themselves are charged with identifying leaders and representatives and building a deliberative constituency (often on an inter-faith basis). Faith groups may need training and support in developing their internal governance and leadership skills, as well as being enabled to participate in community governance structures (like Regional Assemblies, LSPs, Crime and Disorder Partnerships).

9.8 For the purposes of the model, integration is treated as an aspect of the governance rationale. Community cohesion is a specific, substantive (and contested) policy goal, which does not flow in any necessary way from the involvement of faith groups in civil renewal. But the more diverse, inclusive and vibrant governance arrangements that are associated with civil renewal offer the best prospects for the pursuit of this policy goal.

10. Mapping faith involvement in civil renewal: A diagnostic exercise

10.1 Reflecting the current state of debate, this report has used a variety of different terms to describe faith involvement in civil renewal. Terms like faith group and faith community are often used interchangeably. By focusing on the different rationales and arenas for engagement, we are now in a position to clarify the actors and roles involved and to map these on to the key goals of civil renewal. Table 2 specifies the linkages and provides illustrative examples are drawn from the Leicester case study. This mapping exercise enables parallels to be drawn with other, more familiar, actors in community leadership and local governance (e.g. political parties and voluntary organisations), allowing for a more strategic integration of the faith perspective into civil renewal strategies.

**Table 2:
Mapping faith involvement in civil renewal: A diagnostic tool**

Actors in the faith sector	Leicester experience	Role in civil renewal
Faith communities	Christians, Muslims, Hindus and others	Citizens
Faith organisations	(a) Places of worship (b) Religious associations (c) Federations of groups	Members
Faith networks	(a) Sector networks: faith regeneration network; regional faith forum. (b) Topic networks: dialogue groups, including Muslim-Christian women's group; Muslim-Hindu group.	Intermediaries
Faith leadership	(a) Formally constituted: Council of Faiths (b) Informally convened: Faith Leaders' Forum; Multicultural Advisory Group	Leaders
Faith representation	(a) Service-based: advisory groups for police, health, education, etc. (b) Governance-based: strategic partnerships (LSP and regional)	Partners

10.2 Table 2 can be used by policy-makers (working with faith groups) as a **diagnostic tool**. The tool can form the basis of an investigative audit of faith involvement in civil renewal. Specifically, the tool can assist policy-makers to:

- Investigate where civil renewal roles are currently being played within the faith sector
- Realign roles and expectations as appropriate (diverse and overlapping structures may have value);
- Assess understanding of different roles and communication between various players in the faith sector;
- Identify capacity gaps at each organisational level and target necessary support;
- Initiate a structured debate among community leaders and representatives in general about faith group involvement in civil renewal and local governance (e.g. in the context of the local authority, the LSP, the police or health service, or the wider voluntary sector).

10.3 Within the faith sector, we can distinguish between actors at different levels and identify the specific roles they can play in civil renewal strategies.

Faith communities are made up of individual **citizens** and their families who have a religious identification or affiliation and may or may not take part in regular worship (whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu and so on). Faith communities are a basis for, and an arena of, **active citizenship**: the first goal of civil renewal (see 2.2). Faith communities are places where citizens can take-up opportunities (and support) to become actively involved in defining and tackling problems and improving their quality of life (e.g. through citizenship education in schools and the support of volunteering).

10.4 Such opportunities can be provided by, or channelled through, **faith organisations**. These include places of worship (a church, mosque or temple), religious associations (like the Catholic Knights of St Columba) and projects (e.g. for elderly people) and federations of groups associated with a particular religion (e.g. the Federation of Sikh Organisations in Leicester). Citizens are **members** of faith organisations, as they may also be members of other community groups or voluntary associations. Faith organisations can be important building blocks for **strengthened communities**: the second goal of civil renewal. As the Home Office explains, the aim is to help citizens form and sustain their own organisations, bringing people together to deal with

common concerns (via capacity building and community development programmes, and projects to enhance community cohesion) (Home Office n/d (a)).

10.5 For any community organisation to exercise influence within governance, it needs vehicles for the mobilisation of citizens beyond their immediate concerns. In the faith sector, this is the role of **faith networks**, which act as **intermediaries** between leaders and citizen-members. Faith networks may be more or less formal and may be sector-wide or focused on a particular topic or issue. (Leicester has a Faith Regeneration Network covering a full range of community issues and five informal 'dialogue groups', including a Muslim-Hindu group and a Christian-Muslim women's group.) Faith networks are arenas in which different faith organisations can exchange ideas and information, argue about priorities, agree positions, make alliances and 'do deals'. Faith networks are the organisational expression of the constituency served by faith leaders and representatives. Here they can find out the views of member-citizens, playing a role in framing debate, mediating between different viewpoints, brokering conflicts, and feeding back 'higher-level' decisions. They are (imperfect) vehicles of accountability.

10.6 All faith groups have their own leadership arrangements, but we are concerned here with **leaders** of the faith sector more broadly. **Faith leadership** may be formally constituted (e.g. the Leicester Council of Faiths) with a constitution, subscriptions and elected officers, or informally convened (the Faith Leaders' Forum and the Multicultural Advisory Group) with a shifting membership and an *ad hoc* meeting schedule. These bodies provide a vehicle through which the faith leadership can be consulted on both an ongoing basis and on specific issues and incidents (where informal forums are particularly helpful).

10.7 As a **partner** in local governance, the faith sector contributes to the third goal of civil renewal: **partnership in meeting public needs**. Through these arrangements, members of faith communities are enabled to participate in the planning and delivery of public services – from consultation to co-governance. In Leicester, for example, the Council of Faiths provides **faith representation**

on bodies such as the Education Committee of Leicester City Council, the Leicestershire Faith and Health Forum and the Police Advisory Group on Race Issues. There is also a faith sector representative on the LSP and the East Midlands Regional Assembly. The existence of diverse and overlapping organisational arrangements has been seen as a strength of Leicester's approach to faith involvement and community relations. A range of different settings for dialogue, alongside multiple channels of communication, can maximise flexibility, responsiveness and inclusion.

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Appendix 1: Interviews and topic guides

Twenty seven semi-structured interviews were conducted between February and September 2005. Interviewees included leaders and representatives from faith groups and inter-faith bodies at the national level and in Leicester. National and Leicester-based policy-makers and practitioners were also interviewed. Topic guides are attached. Interviews were recorded and transcribed in most cases (occasionally this was inappropriate and/or impractical). Three meetings were observed; presentations were made at two of them, followed by group discussion of the research questions.

A. National-level interviews

Home Office and ODPM

Interviews were conducted with six civil servants, whose responsibilities covered the role of faith groups in community cohesion, civil renewal, urban regeneration and local governance. With their different roles and levels of seniority, interviewees were able to comment on ministerial perspectives, policy development, and practice on the ground.

National faith leaders: Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC)

The research questions were discussed with members of the ICRC at their meeting on 11 July 2005. With a minister in the chair and x national-level faith leaders present, the discussion afforded access to elite perspectives on the role of faith groups in civil renewal – particularly in relation to community cohesion (given the timing of the meeting immediately after the London bombings). All the major faiths, and inter-faith bodies, are represented on the ICRC. Although the secretariat is located in the ODPM, the ICRC acts as an advisory forum and sounding board for a range of government departments. Civil servants in the ICRC secretariat were also interviewed separately.

National inter-faith bodies

Interviews were held with representatives from the Inter-Faith Network for the UK, the Faith Based Regeneration Network and the Commission on Urban Life and Faith.

B. Leicester laboratory

Faith leaders

12 individual interviews were held with leaders and representatives of the major faith communities in Leicester (Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Jewish, Bahai), and one faith group meeting. Interviewees all had an involvement with inter-faith activities in the city. One faith group meeting was observed, and included discussion of the research questions. Evidence was collected on the role of specific faith groups in civil renewal and on inter-faith experiences.

Inter-faith bodies

Interviews were conducted with the chair, vice chair and assistant secretary of the Leicester Council of Faith. The coordinator of the Council of Faiths was also interviewed, as was the coordinator for the Leicester Faith Regeneration Network. One meeting of the Network was observed, which also included a visit to Leicester Central Mosque and opportunity for informal discussion with participants.

Service delivery

Faith leaders were questioned about their role in service and policy advisory bodies (including community safety, health and education). Officers from Leicester City Council and Leicestershire Constabulary were also interviewed.

Partnership governance

The faith representative on the Leicester Partnership (LSP) and East Midlands Regional Assembly was interviewed.

Topic guide 1: Faith group leaders and representatives (including inter-faith)

How does the government define civil renewal?

'Civil renewal is the development of strong, active, and empowered communities – increasingly capable of doing things for themselves, defining the problems they face, and then tackling them together. Its core values are solidarity, mutuality and democratic self determination'

What are the practical policies to achieve this?

- * Active citizenship - citizenship education, volunteering, confidence building.
- * Strong communities - capacity building, community development/cohesion.
- * Partnership in meeting public needs - feedback, consultation, co-governance.

Why might the Home Office want to involve faith groups in civil renewal?

- * Normative – community values and identity.
- * Resources – organisational capacity.
- * Governance – representation and leadership.

1. Why do you think government wants to involve faith groups in civil renewal?
2. Why might faith groups want to be involved?
3. What do you think faith groups can contribute to civil renewal?
4. At what level can faith groups best contribute (national/local/parish)?
5. What do faith groups have to offer that is different from other community-based organisations?
6. Are there benefits for faith groups themselves in engaging with civil renewal?
7. Does it make sense to talk about 'faith groups' or a 'faith sector' in general?
8. How do perspectives on civil renewal vary between different faith groups, in your experience?
9. What is the role for inter-faith activity in civil renewal?
10. What are the most effective ways for faith groups to get involved in civil renewal (structures, processes, projects)?
11. What are the main obstacles experienced by faith groups?
12. How can faith group involvement be evaluated?
13. How would you like to see government policy develop in this area?

Topic guide 2: Policy-makers and practitioners

What is civil renewal?

'Civil renewal is the development of strong, active, and empowered communities – increasingly capable of doing things for themselves, defining the problems they face, and then tackling them together. Its core values are solidarity, mutuality and democratic self determination'

How can it be achieved?

* Active citizenship - citizenship education, volunteering, confidence building.

* Strong communities - capacity building, community development/cohesion.

* Partnership in meeting public needs - feedback, consultation, cogovernance

1. Why involve faith groups in civil renewal?
2. What can faith groups offer that is different from other community organisations?
3. How important is the role of faith groups in accessing hard-to-reach communities?
4. Explore possible rationales for faith group involvement:
 - Normative – community values and identity.
 - Resources – organisational capacity.
 - Governance – representation and leadership role.
5. Which rationale is the most important from a policy point of view?
6. How do faith groups themselves regard their role? Are there benefits for faith groups in engaging with civil renewal?
7. How do perspectives vary between different faith groups? Does it make sense to refer to a 'faith sector'?
8. How do faith group perspectives differ from those of policy-makers?
9. What are the most effective ways of involving faith groups (structures/processes/styles)?
10. At what level can faith groups best contribute (national/regional/local)?
11. What are the main barriers to working with faith groups?
12. How can faith group involvement be evaluated?
13. Is there scope for extending faith group involvement? In what ways?