

## Social Justice Research Programme

# Faith Communities and Local Government in Glasgow

Cecelia Clegg and Michael Rosie,  
Centre for Theology and Public Issues, University of Edinburgh

In November 2004, the Scottish Executive and Glasgow City Council jointly commissioned a short study of the relationship between 7 faith groups and government in the Glasgow city area. This study, which was to provide baseline information for the establishment of an Inter Faith Liaison Officer post in Glasgow City Council, also examined the relations between the faith groups themselves. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The report is split into two parts. The first part of the report provides the findings of a series of single tradition, inter faith, and multi faith focus groups and individual interviews. The second part offers a statistical 'map' of the faith communities in Glasgow constructed on the basis of Census 2001 and other data.

## Main Findings

- Faith communities understand the importance of a relationship with local government. They have skills, capacity, and willingness to contribute to public life in the Glasgow City Council area, though this is not always recognised or utilised
- Faith communities report a strong perception of insensitivity to their religious and cultural needs among Council staff at all levels. This appears to arise from lack of knowledge and training
- There is a perception among many faith groups of a level of 'tokenism' in the way Glasgow City Council involves them in consultation and decision-making
- Most faith communities lack knowledge about Council services and are frustrated and confused about how to access them. The provision of information in appropriate languages is a particular concern for some faith groups
- The attacks on the USA on 11th September 2001 are seen to have marked a turning point from predominantly racial intolerance and abuse towards more religiously motivated attacks. People wearing religious dress or symbols, are a particular target
- A number of faith communities think that they are actively engaged in inter faith activities. However, in certain cases, some faith communities express a reluctance to engage in inter faith work. Barriers to inter faith work are seen as a lack of vision, willingness or leadership to develop strong inter faith relationships.

## Background

The growth of interest in inter faith work in the last 10 years reflects a developing awareness of the significance of religious identity in the social and cultural life of British society. Since 1997, the UK government has been involved in a process of ongoing consultation with faith communities, recognising the particular contribution that they can make to the development of civil society.

The proposal to establish a Glasgow Inter Faith Liaison Officer post, the first of its kind in Scotland, follows the development of similar posts in a number of local government areas in England. These posts are a strategic response by local government to the developing inter faith consultation agenda.

## Research Aims

The overall aims of this research were to:

- identify the key issues for inter faith work, consultation and community development work in Glasgow city.
- provide a resource for an Inter Faith Liaison Officer, who will be based in Glasgow City Council.

## Approach

The study focussed on 7 faiths: Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The rationale for choosing these faiths was that they are members of the Glasgow Forum of Faiths.

### Qualitative:

- 6 single faith focus groups: Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and 2 Christian groups.
- 2 interviews each with representatives of Baha'i and Buddhist faith groups.
- 2 inter faith focus groups: Scottish Inter Faith Council, and Glasgow Forum of Faiths.
- 2 multi faith focus groups: one for women, and one for young people.
- One focus group for Glasgow City Council officials.
- 5 semi structured interviews with groups not represented in focus groups.

Focus groups and interviewees were questioned about engagement with government, any barriers to such engagement, the contribution of their faith group to the life of Glasgow, and their relationship with other faith groups. The inclusion of a group for Glasgow City Council Officials was to compare their understanding of the Council's relationship with faith groups with that of the faith groups themselves.

### Quantitative:

- The development of a broad statistical map of Glasgow's faith communities using existing data, in particular the 2001 Census.
- A 10 question questionnaire distributed through focus groups.

The questionnaire was made available in Arabic, English, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

## Other Findings

### From field work

- There is a need to establish diverse provision of services as normative, rather than as special exceptions to the current largely white, Christian, male, heterosexual, and able bodied norm.
- Religion has implications in terms of community cohesion and safety. It can no longer be regarded as a purely private matter, but has to be taken seriously and addressed in the public sphere.
- It is not helpful to subsume all religious intolerance in Glasgow under the title of 'sectarianism.' Wider religious intolerance must be named and addressed in its own right.
- Glasgow City Council would benefit from a communication strategy tailored to interaction with faith communities.
- Though formal relationships exist between faith groups at official level, there is a significant lack of both structures which facilitate a relationship, and actual contact, between faith communities, at local level.

### From statistical map of Glasgow

- Most Glaswegians describe their current religion as Christian although almost one in four describe their current religion as 'none'.

- Other religious traditions make up about 5% of Glasgow's population, and the city is a focal point for Scotland's Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities.
- Some religious communities are disproportionately found in certain parts of the city. The Kelvin area contains relatively large proportions of people from the 'Other Christian', Buddhist, Hindu and 'Another religion' communities, as well as from those of no religion. The Southside proves a focus for the Muslim, Jewish and Sikh communities.
- Some religious communities have a relatively older age profile, notably the Church of Scotland and Jewish communities. Others are relatively younger, notably the Muslim and Sikh communities.
- Most Glaswegians retain the religion of their upbringing, and the major religious communities recruit largely through birth. The major exception is with people of 'no religion', many of whom come from Christian backgrounds.
- Inter-marriage between Christian traditions (including between Catholics and Protestants) is common in

Glasgow. By contrast we find high rates of 'homogamy' amongst Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.

- Amongst both men and women Hindus, Jewish-persons and 'other Christians' remain more likely to be in 'managerial - professional' jobs; Presbyterians, Catholics, Muslims and Sikhs remain relatively concentrated in 'routine' occupations.
- Home ownership is most common in the Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities. Social renting is most common amongst Catholics, Presbyterians and the no religion group.
- Glasgow's Presbyterians and Catholics have virtually the same educational profile with around half of each group having no qualifications. Strikingly, more than half the Hindu group are graduates, which may help to explain their relatively advantaged position in the labour market.
- In terms of reported health, life limiting illness and being 'permanently sick or disabled', there appears to be some evidence of Catholic disadvantage.

If you wish further copies of this Research Findings or have any enquiries about social research, please contact us at:

Scottish Executive Social Research

1-F (Dockside)

Victoria Quay

EDINBURGH

EH6 6QQ

Tel: 0131 244-7565

Fax: 0131 244-7573

Email: [socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch)

If you wish a copy of "Faith Communities and Local Government in Glasgow" the research report which is summarised in this research findings, please send a cheque for £5.00 made payable to:

Blackwell's Bookshop

53 South Bridge

Edinburgh

EH1 1YS

Tel: 0131 622 8283 / 0131 622 8258

Fax: 0131 622 8258

Email: [business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk](mailto:business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk)

Copies of this document are available in Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

تتوفر نسخ من هذه الوثيقة في اللغات العربية والفارسية والهندية والبنجابية والأوردية.

نسخه های از این نوشتار به زبانهای عربی، فارسی، هندی، پنجابی و اردو موجود می باشد.

इस दस्तावेज़ की प्रतियाँ एरेबिक, फ़ारसी, हिंदी, पंजाबी और उर्दू में मिल सकती हैं।

ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਾਪੀਆਂ ਏਰੇਬਿਕ, ਫ਼ਾਰਸੀ, ਹਿੰਦੀ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਉਰਦੂ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

اس دستاویز کے نسخے عربی، فارسی، ہندی، پنجابی اور اردو میں دستیاب ہیں۔

This document (and other Research Findings and Reports) and information about social research in the Scottish Executive may be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>

The site carries up-to-date information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Executive. Subjects covered include transport, housing, social inclusion, rural affairs, children and young people, education, social work, community care, local government, civil justice, crime and criminal justice, regeneration, planning and women's issues. The site also allows access to information about the Scottish Household Survey.

ISBN 0-7559-2774-5



9 780755 927746