

**FAITH IN OUR FUTURE: PEOPLE OF FAITH, SOCIAL  
ACTION AND THE CITY OF LEEDS**

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# **FAITH IN OUR FUTURE: PEOPLE OF FAITH, SOCIAL ACTION AND THE CITY OF LEEDS**

## **THE INTER-RELIGIOUS SOCIAL ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**

People of faith are involved in a variety of social action projects in the city of Leeds. These projects provide social care for groups such as young or elderly people, campaign against social injustices, and work to empower marginalised groups such as homeless people. These social action projects are organised by:

- **congregations** associated with a place of worship or a worship group
- **organisations** associated with particular faith groups
- **individuals** employed in the statutory and voluntary sector

Through these projects, people of faith are making a significant contribution to improving the overall quality of city life in Leeds and are actively shaping its future. Moreover, they are looking for ways to extend this work. Some social activists are considering whether people of different faiths can co-operate to achieve joint social action objectives in the city. In other words, they are considering whether to develop **multi-faith social action** in the future.

The Inter-Religious Social Action Research Project was set up in 1996 to examine:

- the ways in which people of faith are contributing to the city of Leeds through their involvement in social action
- the potential for people of different faiths to work together in Leeds to achieve common social action goals in the future

This Report outlines the findings of the Inter-Religious Social Action Research Project. It examines the social action undertaken by people of faith in Leeds and explores the potential for multi-faith initiatives being established in the city in the future. The Report's findings draw on the results of a questionnaire survey, a series of interviews and information gathered through participant observation. Details of the research can be found in the Appendix at the end of the Report.

#### **THE REPORT HAS FOUR PARTS:**

**Part I** provides introductory information about the multi-faith, multi-ethnic character of Leeds. It also outlines some of the challenges that the city faces at present and the ways in which Leeds City Council (LCC) and other statutory and voluntary organisations are responding to them.

**Part II** focuses on the type of social action initiatives in which people of faith are involved. It also explores their motivations for involvement and the contributions they hope to make to the city through their work.

**Part III** describes some of the multi-faith social action projects currently operating in Leeds and identifies the benefits and limitations of working in this way.

**Part IV** brings the Report to a conclusion. It identifies a series of issues for consideration by those wishing to initiate a multi-faith venture and highlights the different types of multi-faith social action projects which could be developed in the future.

# **PART I**

## **FAITHS IN LEEDS**

Part I of the Report provides information about Leeds as a multi-faith, multi-ethnic city. It then outlines some of the challenges it faces and the ways in which different organisations within the city are trying to meet them.

### **1.1 LEEDS: A MULTI-FAITH, MULTI-ETHNIC CITY**

Leeds is the largest city in Yorkshire and is surrounded by an outer ring of small towns. Together, the city and these surrounding towns form Leeds Metropolitan District. They have a combined population of roughly three quarters of a million.

People belong to and identify with different religious faiths in Leeds including: Ba'hai; Brahma Kumari; Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Jainism; Judaism; Islam; Parsi Zoroastrianism; Rastafarianism; Sikhism; and Taoism. Some of these faiths contain several different denominations or sects. Other people have no religious faith and may be agnostic, atheist, humanist or secular.

No exact figures of the numbers of people in Leeds identifying with faiths groups exist because the population Census does not collect this information. However, faith leaders and academics have estimated the size of some of the faith groups in Leeds as follows:

- 4,000 Hindus
- 10,000 Jewish people
- 10,000 Muslims
- 9 000 Sikhs

\* These figures would be higher if they included the student population of Leeds.

Direct comparisons cannot be made between these figures, however, because some have been calculated on the basis of those who regularly attend worship services, while others are calculated on the basis of the wider social networks associated with faith groups. For these reasons, no estimates exist for the number of Christians in Leeds. Nor do estimates exist for the size of Ba'hai, Brahma Kumari, Buddhist, Parsi Zoroastrian, Rastafarian and Taoist groupings in the city. These groupings are harder to identify because they have relatively few members and many members are not associated with an established place of worship.

Given that estimates of the size of faith groups in Leeds are problematic or non-existent, it is important to highlight the different ways in which people identify with a faith group. These are outlined below.

## 1.2 PEOPLE OF FAITH: GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Many people of faith form groups called congregations which meet regularly for worship. Most frequently, congregations meet in a **place of worship** such as a church (Christians), a gurdwara (Sikhs), a mosque (Muslims), a synagogue (Jews), or a temple (Hindus). Less frequently, congregations meet as a **worship group** at a member's home or in rented premises. Congregations are most often represented to non-members and outside agencies by **faith leaders** or elected **representatives**. Through meeting regularly, members of a congregation know and support each other and form social networks. **Believing and belonging** are therefore key characteristics of a congregation. Members of congregations also involve themselves in activities other than worship such as social clubs, women's groups, drama groups, or social action projects. Larger numbers of people often join in or benefit from these activities. As a result, the social networks associated with congregations frequently extend beyond those who share in worship. Some of these people may share the religious beliefs of the congregation. Others may participate in an activity because it runs in the area where they live, rather than because they share the religious beliefs of those who organise the activity.

Other people may share the religious beliefs of a faith group and identify themselves with that faith, but choose not to be involved, or involve themselves only occasionally, in the life of a congregation. This group of people can be described as **believing without belonging**. Other people identify with a faith group because it is linked to their **ethnic or cultural background**. The links between faith and ethnicity in Leeds are examined below.

## 1.3 ETHNIC AND FAITH LINKS

Over time, people have come to live and work in Leeds from all parts of Britain and from all over the world. As a result, people in Leeds have the following ethnicities: African, African-Caribbean, Chinese, Irish, 'Other Black', 'Other Asian', South Asian, South East Asian and 'White British'. The proportion of people in each of these groups is shown in the table below.

Ethnicity	n=680 722	Percentage
White British	640 997	94.2
Black Caribbean	6 554	1.0
Black African	1 343	0.2
Other Black	2 918	0.4
Indian	9 900	1.5
Pakistani	9 329	1.4
Bangladeshi	1 759	0.3
Chinese	2 066	0.3
Other Asian	1 548	0.2
Other	4 308	0.6

\* Source: 1991, Leeds City Council

There are links between particular faith groups and ethnic backgrounds in Leeds. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Christianity:** the majority of Christians in Leeds have 'White British' ethnicity. Some have African, African-Caribbean, Chinese and other European ethnicities such as Greek, Irish and Polish.
- **Hinduism:** the majority of Hindus in Leeds have Indian ethnicity.
- **Islam:** the majority of Muslims in Leeds have South Asian ethnicity and more specifically Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnicity. There are also African, African-Caribbean, Middle Eastern and 'White British' Muslims in the city.
- **Judaism:** the majority of Jews in Leeds have ethnic origins in Central and Eastern Europe.
- **Sikhism:** the majority of Sikhs have Indian Punjabi ethnicity.

The links that exist between particular faiths and particular ethnicities in Leeds mean that when some people talk about their faith group, they may also be referring to their identification with an ethnic group. For example, when people describe themselves as Muslim or Sikh, they may also be speaking about their ethnic identity as Pakistani or as Indian Punjabi. Moreover, for some this is a **political identification**. For example, some young Sikh men in Leeds are choosing to wear traditional Sikh symbols, such as the turban. This may be a political statement of pride in their families, their ethnic background and their faith as Punjabis and Sikhs in a society where they are in a minority, rather than an expression of spiritual discipline.

#### **FAITHS IN LEEDS**

People identify with different faiths in Leeds including Ba'hai, Brahma Kumari, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Parsi Zoroastrianism, Rastafarianism, Sikhism and Taoism. When people identify with a faith group in the city, they may be referring to their participation in shared worship and/or their involvement with a social network associated with a place of worship or a worship group. Alternatively, they may be referring to a sense of identification with others who share common religious beliefs, ethnic heritage and cultural traditions. They may also be referring to family or ethnic connections with a particular faith or to associations stemming from political responses to minority status.

## 1.4 DIVERSITY WITHIN FAITHS

It was stated above that when people talk about belonging to faith groups, they are referring to a range of different experiences and reasons for their association. Other factors impact on the ways in which people experience faith and relate to faith groups in the city. These include sectarian, denominational and caste differences.

Within all major faiths there is theological diversity rooted in different interpretations of sacred texts, traditions and law. This diversity is reflected in ritual expression (such as forms of worship) and patterns of leadership. The main sectarian and denominational groups in Leeds and the organisations which link them are outlined below.

- **Buddhism:** there are five different groups in the city - Izaak, Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, Jamyang, Theravada and Zen. Each group meets separately to meditate, to celebrate festivals and to study religious teachings and texts. They are connected by the Leeds-based newsletter, *InterBeing*, which informs each group about the activities of the others.
- **Christianity:** there are three main traditions in the city - Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic. In Leeds, the Orthodox tradition contains sub-groupings, for example, the Greek Orthodox Church. According to the *Leeds Churches Directory*, there are the following sub-groupings within the Protestant tradition: Anglican, Baptist, Independent, Methodist, Pentecostal, Quaker, Salvation Army, United Reformed and West Yorkshire African-Caribbean Council of Churches (WYACCC). While each of these sub-groupings organises independently for worship and social action, they are also linked by a wider Christian network. In recent years, different denominations have established relationships and, in some circumstances, worship or work together on social action projects. Such co-operation is described as ecumenical. To facilitate churches working together on future initiatives, the Council of Leeds Churches Together (CoLeCT) has been established.
- **Islam:** there are two main traditions in the city - Sunni and Shi'ite. The vast majority of Muslims in Leeds are Sunni. However, this group is further divided into Deobandi and Barelvi groups. Each follows a different interpretation of Islam, has its own mosque and organises its own social action initiatives.
- **Judaism:** there are two main traditions in the city - Orthodox and Reform. The majority of Jews in Leeds are Orthodox. While Orthodox and Reform groups worship separately, social action is organised on a unified basis. For example, a joint organisation called the Leeds Jewish Representative Council speaks on behalf of Jewish people in Leeds. Similarly, there is a range of Jewish social action organisations.
- **Sikhism:** as well as orthodox Sikhs, there are four other traditions in the city - Namdhari, Radhasoami, Nishkam Sevak Jatha and Nirankari. Each group worships separately in its own gurdwara and practises in accordance with its own interpretation of Sikhism. There is, however, a newly formed Sikh Forum operating in the city which seeks to present a unified 'voice' on matters of concern to all Sikhs in Leeds.

As indicated above, sectarian and denominational diversity within faiths in Leeds has practical implications. At present, when people of faith involve themselves in congregational worship and social action, they organise along denominational and sectarian lines. In other words, they work within a sub-section of a larger faith group. Each sub-section has its own integrity based on a specific interpretation and teaching of a religious tradition. These different sub-sections do not always exist in isolation. There are organisations which connect different sects and denominations and facilitate co-operation on matters of common concern. For example, during the Gulf War Christian and Muslim faith leaders met to discuss the issue.

Some denominational sub-sections are also linked to an ethnic group. For example, many African-Caribbean Christians in Leeds belong to churches which are described as 'Black majority churches'. Although membership of these churches is open to all Christians, the majority has 'Black' ethnicity. These churches have links with a range of African-Caribbean organisations currently operating in the city and organise together as the West Yorkshire African Caribbean Council of Churches (WYACCC). This enables them to speak on issues relating to 'Black' people. In this way, African Caribbean Christians have established church congregations which relate to and support them as Christians and as members of a minority ethnic group.

In addition to denominational differences, caste also impacts on the way in which Hindus and Sikhs relate to faith groups in the city. The caste system originated in the Indian subcontinent and traditionally defined the relative status and/or occupation of groups of people. There are many different caste groups in Leeds and this affects the way in which worship and social action are organised. This is described below:

- **Hindus:** As stated earlier, Hinduism is associated with Indian ethnicity. However, India is a very large country and most Hindus in Leeds have their origins in two specific areas. These are Gujarat in west India and Punjab in north-west India. As a result of these different regional origins, Hindus in Leeds often have different cultural traditions and speak different community languages. For example, the community languages of Gujarati Hindus are Gujarati and Hindi, while for Punjabi Hindus, they are Punjabi and Urdu. The division between Gujarati and Punjabi Hindus is also reflected in caste associations. While Punjabi Hindus are generally Khattris or Brahmans, the largest grouping among Gujarati Hindus is Mochi. As a result of these differences, Gujarati and Punjabi Hindus organise separately for cultural activities, worship and social action purposes in the city.
- **Sikhs:** In Leeds, some Sikh places of worship and social action projects are organised along caste lines. The primary caste organisation among Sikhs in Leeds relates to patterns of migration. Some Sikhs migrated directly to Britain from the Punjab in the 1960s, while others lived in East Africa before relocating to Leeds in the late 1960s. The majority of East African Sikhs belong to the Ramgarhia caste. Their shared caste association and common experience of Africa means that they form a distinct Sikh grouping in the city and have established separate Ramgarhia organisations.

While a smaller caste group which migrated directly to Leeds has established the Kalgidhar Bhatra Sangat Gurdwara, this contrasts with most other Sikhs who have established organisations and gurdwaras for use by a variety of caste groupings.

The above examples of Hindu and Sikh organisation highlight the importance of sub-groupings. This system of organisation facilitates the maintenance of cultural continuity and it is a feature of other faith groups in the city. For example, the Chinese church (Christian) holds services in Mandarin, Cantonese and English as a means of bringing Christianity to Chinese and South East Asian groupings in the city and of passing on cultural traditions and languages to younger generations. Worship and social action is, therefore, not only organised on the basis of faith or denomination. For some groups, common linguistic, caste and cultural heritage influence the structures, aims and organisation of faith groups in the context of a multi-ethnic city.

### **Faiths and localities**

Locality is also important for understanding the ways in which faith groups operate in the city. Smaller faith groupings, such as congregations and social action organisations, often draw their membership and associated social networks from people who live in the immediate area. As a result, their primary concerns often relate to local issues.

This is significant given that there are residential concentrations of faith groupings in the city. Residential concentrations are most prevalent where faith is associated with minority ethnic groups. For example, while there are Jewish people throughout Leeds, there is a concentration of residence in Alwoodley, Moortown and Shadwell. Analysis of the 1991 Census also shows that there are residential concentrations of Muslims in Chapel Allerton, City and Holbeck, Harehills and Headingley, and of Sikhs in Chapel Allerton, Harehills and Moortown.

The residential clustering of particular faith groups is reflected in the social infrastructure of these areas. Facilities to meet religious and social requirements have been established. These include places of worship and religious teaching, religious schools, and specialist food, clothes, book and video shops. People belonging to minority groups who do not live in these areas, travel to them to attend places of worship and to make use of the religious and social facilities. In this way, the faith and cultural life of groups of people are sustained through their investment in particular localities in the city.

Understanding locality is thus significant for understanding the ways in which people of faith organise worship and social action in the city. Its role in facilitating social action and the implications this has for multi-faith social action are examined in greater detail in Part **III** of this Report.

### **THE IMPLICATIONS OF DIVERSITY WITHIN FAITHS**

The diversity within faith groups in Leeds is reflected in organisational structures. This diversity means that references to faith groups in the city may relate to different types of groups. For example, a reference to a Christian faith group may overlook the fact that it could also be described as Methodist, 'White British', and living in Armley. Similarly, a reference to a Sikh faith group may overlook the fact that it could also be described as Ramgarhia and living in Chapel Allerton. This diversity impacts on the potential for future initiatives which involve different faith groups working together. For example, although an existing social action project may be described as 'Christian', further analysis might show that it is a project run by African Caribbean Christians living in Harehills. Similarly, a project described as 'Muslim' may be run by Pakistani Muslims living in South Leeds. If these two projects were to link up, it would involve bridging more than differences between different faiths. It would also involve bridging the differences between distinct ethnicities and the problems which these groups face in their local area.

### **1.5 THE CIVIC SYSTEM, BUSINESS SECTOR AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

The diversity of faith groups in Leeds must be understood in relation to the context in which they operate. For this reason, Part I now turns its focus to the city of Leeds. It describes some of the challenges which the city presently faces and the ways in which Leeds City Council (LCC) and other statutory and voluntary organisations are responding to them.

Leeds City Council was established in its present form in 1974. It is comprised of elected representatives of the people and a vast number of employees who work in the public sector. It has Committees and Departments responsible for Community Benefits and Rights, Education, Employment and Economic Development, Environment, Equal Opportunities, Health, Housing, Planning, Social Services and Transport. To meet its responsibilities in these areas, it works with the European Union, national government, the business sector and a range of other non-governmental organisations. With these partners, LCC significantly contributes to cultural, economic, and social development in the city. For example, LCC often works in partnership with the city's business sector. The latter forms a crucial part of the city's economy and provides the jobs and financial investment which enables it to function as an economic centre. As a result, Leeds has a high rate of job creation, low unemployment levels and a growing enterprise culture when compared with other British cities. The voluntary sector also plays an important role in improving the quality of life in the city. Voluntary organisations and volunteers provide a range of social care services in the city, for example, they run facilities for youths. They also contribute to local regeneration schemes, for example, through Tenants Associations and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. In addition, they campaign on a variety of issues

related to social injustice such as racial harassment and homelessness. In this way, they make an important contribution to Leeds.

## 1.6 CHALLENGES FACING THE CITY OF LEEDS

Despite its strengths, Leeds also faces a number of challenges. The social and economic situation of some areas of the city and some sections of the city's population are characterised by high levels of deprivation. There is a significant difference in the opportunities and life styles of those who live in the inner and outer areas of Leeds. People who live in the inner-city tend to have lower educational attainment levels and higher levels of unemployment. For example, the long-term unemployment rate is as high as 45 per cent in some areas of the inner city and 58 per cent of the city's unemployed live in 12 inner-city areas. In addition to this, inner-city wards are affected by a concentration of poor quality housing and inadequate or inappropriate access to facilities such as health resources. Given the multiple problems which they face, inner-city areas have particular regeneration needs.

Moreover, particular sections of the city's population are disproportionately disadvantaged. For example, the unemployment rates of minority ethnic groups are between 8 and 16 per cent higher than that of 'white' people in Leeds. Similarly, young people who live in inner-city areas are in a relatively disadvantaged position in the labour market. The lack of employment opportunities available to some people in Leeds has negative consequences for their standard of living. This is a matter of concern for LCC and social activists. Their response is outlined below.

## 1.7 MEETING THE CHALLENGES THAT LEEDS FACES

The public, business and voluntary sectors of Leeds are attempting to deal with the challenges described above in an effort to improve the overall quality of life for people in Leeds and to improve the city's future prospects. The recognition that they can accomplish more through joint action than they can achieve independently has led many to become involved in partnership initiatives to tackle common problems and to achieve shared goals. At present, 200 organisations work in partnership on different projects in the city. To ensure the success of these projects in the future, an overall strategy for regeneration has been developed. This strategy, 'Vision for Leeds', is viewed as a window of opportunity to raise standards and to create a more united city in the future.

During the initial stages of the Vision for Leeds consultation, representatives from public, business and voluntary sectors agreed that future regeneration initiatives should be based on: prosperity; high aspirations; equal access to opportunities; economic, environmental and physical security; a sense of pride in local areas; and environmentally sustainable economic development. Individuals and organisations, including congregations at places of worship and a range of projects in which people of faith are involved, were also consulted about how to make Leeds a better place. All of these views are incorporated in the final 'Vision for

Leeds' document. This will influence priorities for action and funding in the city in the future as LCC, the business sector and the voluntary sector have committed themselves to working towards the goals it outlines.

Vision for Leeds is, therefore, an example of the way in which the civic system is trying to ensure that future regeneration strategies are appropriate to people's needs. It also exemplifies the increasingly important role that social activists play in shaping the city's future priorities. The specific contribution which people of faith are making through their involvement in social action in the city is the subject matter of Part II of the Report.

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## **PART II**

### **SOCIAL ACTION AND PEOPLE OF FAITH IN LEEDS**

The diversity of the population of Leeds and the challenges that the city faces at the turn of the millennium were described in Part I of the Report. Part II turns to an examination of the ways in which people of faith are responding to these challenges through their involvement in social action. It begins with an outline of the areas of social action on which they work. This is followed by a description of the activities undertaken by different social action organisations and congregations. A review of the strategies and aims of individual social activists and the implications for co-operation between organisations and congregations draws Part II to a conclusion.

#### **2.1 TYPES OF SOCIAL ACTION INITIATIVES**

People of faith participate in different types of social action in the city. These are described below.

Many are involved in **social welfare provision**. They work to alleviate the problems of marginalised or vulnerable people in Leeds such as the homeless and elderly. For example, a Sunday luncheon club in Chapel Allerton has been established for elderly people who live on low incomes and suffer from social isolation.

**Fund-raising** for local, national and international causes is also undertaken by people of faith. For example, the congregation at the Hindu Temple in Headingley has raised funds for temple alterations and for Vision Aid which supports blind and partially-sighted people.

Others are involved in initiatives which aim to forge social change in Leeds through **building social relationships**. For example, an organisation called Concord promotes dialogue and friendship between people of different faiths in the city.

People of faith are also involved in **campaigning** for change in local, national, and international affairs. An example of this is the involvement of local people in the campaign, Jubilee 2000. This campaign lobbies for the cancellation of debts owed by the world's poorest countries by the year 2000. The Leeds group has been particularly active. For example, it recently organised a train to take 700 local people to Birmingham so that they could participate in a national demonstration. Campaigning work is also directed towards initiating change within faith groups. In this type of initiative, activists seek to redefine the attitudes and policies that their faith group holds on particular issues or about particular groups of people. For example, the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement campaigns for acceptance from the church for gay and lesbian Christians.

People of faith are also involved in **regeneration** initiatives in areas of Leeds which have specific social and economic needs. For example, they have submitted funding proposals to the Single Regeneration Board (SRB) for projects to regenerate a number of inner-city localities.

## **2.2 SOCIAL ACTION ORGANISATIONS**

People of faith are not only involved in different types of social action in the city, they also work through different types of organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors. Examples of three social action organisations which are supported by people of faith are described below. These profiles draw attention to the different aims and structures of organisations and to the contribution which they make to the city of Leeds.

### **Faith in Leeds (FIL)**

FIL is an ecumenical Christian organisation which was established in 1985. It aims to raise awareness amongst Christians of the link between social justice and spirituality and, in this way, to act as a catalyst for the founding of social justice initiatives in Leeds.

To achieve its aims, FIL provides individual Christians and congregations with opportunities to reflect on social justice in the city. For example, it organises one day events called 'Retreat on the Streets.' People pass a day in the city with only 50 pence to spend in order to gain an insight into life on the margins of society. Often this experience encourages people to become involved in initiatives to bring about social justice. Involvement is further encouraged by a newsletter which provides information about projects working in fields such as homelessness, HIV/Aids, and child prostitution. At the end of each article, there is information about the ways in which people can support or become involved in these projects.

FIL is, therefore, an example of a social action organisation which is primarily motivated by religious beliefs. It offers a Christian response to issues of social injustice.

### **Leeds Jewish Welfare Board (LJWB)**

LJWB was established over 100 years ago to provide welfare services for Jewish migrants who had recently arrived from Eastern Europe. Today, it provides a range of social care services, including a housing association, a Meals on wheels' service, a day care centre for elderly people and a children's home. Although a quarter of its clients are not Jewish, its ethos remains Jewish. This means that it continues to meet the specific needs of Jewish people, for example, by providing kosher food and a safe environment in which people will not meet any anti-Semitism.

Although the motivations of LJWB are associated with the Jewish faith, its activities are not sustained by religious beliefs alone. While its concern for providing services for Jewish people relates to their religious faith, it also relates to their cultural heritage and to the distinct problems which affect them. It is, therefore, an example of an organisation whose primary aim is to meet the social welfare needs of people who share a faith and ethnic identity.

### **South Leeds Elderly Group (SLEG)**

SLEG was set up in 1985 by local people in Beeston who identified a lack of service provision for elderly people in their area. It provides a range of services, including a day care centre and practical support for people living in their own homes. These services are primarily designed to meet the needs of Punjabi-speaking Muslims and the majority of SLEG's clients are Pakistani Muslims.

SLEG is designated as an elderly person's service although, in practice, it serves a wider clientele. Local people of all ages attend surgeries held at its premises by staff from LCC's Community Benefits and Rights Department, LCC's Housing Department, and by MPs and local councillors. These surgeries enable many people to meet with statutory and civic representatives in a place where they have language support and feel comfortable to express their needs. This extension of the clientele and the primary purpose of the group shows that SLEG is directed by local people and is developing in response to their needs.

Like the **LJWB**, SLEG is an example of an organisation which provides services for a group of people who are recognised as sharing a faith and ethnic identity. This group meets particular needs such as dietary requirements and the provision of separate services for men and women. In addition to this, the organisation aims to meet the needs of people who live within a specific locality. Faith beliefs, therefore, are not the guiding principle of the organisation. Instead, the organisation is guided by the needs of a specific group of people in a locality who share a faith and ethnic identity.

### **THE POTENTIAL FOR CO-OPERATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS**

Different organisations work in the same areas of social action in Leeds. This suggests that there is potential for co-operation between them in the future. The examples of FIL, LJWB and SLEG draw attention to the differences between social action organisations; some are motivated and sustained by religious beliefs, others by a shared faith and/or ethnic background, and others again, by the needs of people in a locality. Although organisations may have common objectives such as regeneration or welfare provision, their potential for working together is not only determined by this. It is also affected by the links which organisations have with faith, ethnicity and locality. This may limit the potential ways in which organisations can work together in the future. For example, when service provision takes account of different dietary laws or community languages, joint service provision may not be appropriate. In such cases, it may be more appropriate for organisations to share information and experiences to strengthen their work while providing separate service provision. This suggests that when considering the potential for co-operation between social action organisations which are associated with faith groups in Leeds, it is also important to consider the form which this co-operation might take.

### **2.3 CONGREGATIONS AND SOCIAL ACTION IN LEEDS**

Organisations provide one key channel through which people of faith involve themselves in social action in the city. They also work through congregations associated with a place of worship or a worship group. The range of initiatives undertaken by congregations is outlined below. This information draws on the findings from 173 completed questionnaires. The details of this questionnaire survey can be found in the Appendix of the Report.

#### **The level of involvement of congregations in social action**

The vast majority of congregations (94 per cent) are involved in social action initiatives, although the proportion of members involved varies between congregations. In just over half (53 per cent) of congregations, a few members participate in social action, while in roughly one third (32 per cent) of congregations, up to half the membership is involved in social action. More than half is involved in 9 per cent of congregations and no members are involved in only one per cent of congregations. This is shown in the table below.

**Table 2.01 Level of involvement in social action**

<b>Level of involvement</b>	<b>n =173</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
None	2	1
A few	92	53
Up to half	56	32
More than half	16	9
No answer	7	4

This shows that in some congregations the majority of members are involved in social action, while in others it is a minority who are involved. This variation may reflect differing levels of ability for involvement. Some congregations, for example, have a particularly high proportion of elderly people who are less able to involve themselves in social action. It also reflects the fact that people of faith do not only undertake social action as part of their congregation but also work through organisations and as individuals.

### **Areas of concern**

Congregations act on a range of concerns to make a contribution to city life. The majority (93 per cent) is involved in more than one type of social action, for example, care for elderly people and international aid. The survey showed, however, that there is a concentration of effort in particular areas of social action. These are outlined below.

**Table 2.02 Areas of Social Action Fields for Congregations**

<b>Social action activity</b>	<b>Number of congregations*</b>	<b>Percentage of all congregations</b>
Poverty	75	43
Youth work	130	75
Homelessness	65	38
Health	39	23
Support for families	90	52
Crime prevention	42	24
Care for elderly people	133	77
Campaigning for peace	33	19
Immigration and asylum	24	14
Anti-racism	30	17
International aid	97	56
Women's issues	32	18
Local neighbourhood projects	104	60
Other	23	13

\* Respondents could give more than one answer, therefore, the number of congregations does not equal 173

Congregations are most active in the areas of youth work and care for elderly people. Roughly three quarters of congregations are involved in initiatives with these groups making them the most frequently supported

social action initiatives. In addition, just over half of congregations (52 per cent) are involved in action to support families, for example, Mother and Toddler groups. Taken together, youth work, care for elderly people, and support for families can be seen as reflecting a concern for people at particular stages of their lives, perhaps when they are most vulnerable. Moreover, it shows a commitment to ensuring that adequate social care and welfare provision is made for them.

In addition to this, over half of congregations (60 per cent) are involved in local neighbourhood projects. This suggests that they have a concern for and a commitment to their locality and are working with other local people because they share the same concerns. A similar proportion (56 per cent) of congregations is involved in international aid. This suggests that they have a concern for people they will never meet and for situations outside their personal experience. Involvement in international aid and local neighbourhood projects is not mutually exclusive. Congregations do not focus on the local instead of the international or vice versa but are concerned with local and global issues.

A smaller proportion of congregations is involved in initiatives which are concerned with supporting people who live at the margins of society. For example, just under half are involved in anti-poverty (43 per cent) and homelessness (38 per cent) ventures. The lower levels of involvement in these areas may be a reflection of the ability or confidence of congregations to work in these areas, whether they perceive these issues as the responsibility of national government, or whether they lack an awareness of these problems.

Congregations also involve themselves in initiatives which are designed to educate and to improve people's quality of life. For example, roughly a quarter are involved in social action initiatives in the areas of health (23 per cent) and crime prevention (24 per cent).

#### **THE POTENTIAL FOR CO-OPERATION BETWEEN CONGREGATIONS**

The majority of congregations in Leeds are involved in social action initiatives. The focus of these initiatives are often the same and relate to concerns about youths, families, elderly people, local neighbourhoods, international aid, poverty and homelessness. This commonality suggests that there is potential for working together in the future to increase the effectiveness of congregational social action, for example, through the sharing of resources and expertise. Some initiatives, however, are based in a locality. For example, care for elderly people takes place near their homes and in familiar surroundings. This suggests that on these issues, it would be most appropriate for congregations within a local area to co-operate.

## 2.4 INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIAL ACTION IN LEEDS

In Leeds, many people of faith are involved in social action organisations associated with faith groups, congregational initiatives and organisations which operate in the voluntary and statutory sectors. Each of these individuals has their own perspective on the contribution which social action ventures make to city life. To explore these perspectives, interviews were conducted with a range of activists who identify themselves as Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh (further details can be found in the Appendix to the Report). This section outlines the findings of these interviews and draws attention to the religious, personal and socio-political reasons which social activists gave for their involvement in social action.

### **The role of religious belief**

A significant proportion of interviewees made reference to the beliefs and teachings of their religious tradition in relation to social action. This was most frequently the case among those who identified themselves as Buddhist, Christian and Sikh. Buddhist interviewees, for example, made reference to the importance of the belief that each individual is required to make a contribution to the elimination of suffering. One interviewee explained this as follows:

**The individual is in a whole cosmos...Small acts of consideration can lead to a humanistic society. It is about bringing the focus back to me and then working out. This is about the law of cause and effect which should be done now to create the future. One should act now with total responsibility.**

Some Buddhists in Leeds therefore participate in social action as a result of their religious beliefs about the importance of individual responsibility.

Similarly, Christian interviewees spoke about their religious beliefs. They made a connection between their social action and their understanding of what it means to be a Christian. For example, most explained that Christianity should make a practical difference to people's lives. One interviewee stated:

**As a Christian, I see that the Bible teaches, 'You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.' We are supposed to make a difference; not just by preaching, but how we live.**

In addition, many Christian interviewees explained that their religious beliefs specifically call them to work for social justice. A social activist working for an ecumenical organisation said:

**the Christian faith is...expressed in, 'Love God and your neighbour.' Love is a social activity not a religious ideal. Many people are dying through neglect, apathy, greed, and this is a denial of the Gospel imperative.**

These activists therefore believe that there is an inextricable link between their social action and their religious beliefs. For this reason, many have chosen to work through Christian organisations which incorporate their religious beliefs rather than through a secular organisation.

Sikh interviewees also stated that the teachings of their religious tradition motivated their decisions to become involved in social action. One interviewee explained that the essence of being a Sikh is how you live your life. He said, **"it is about being an active agent for change."** Another interviewee highlighted the connection between her belief in the teachings of Sikhism and her daily life by saying:

**Sikhism has a philosophy which is to be humble and to do good. I strongly believe in that. This directs and informs me about the choices I make in life.**

These interviewees, therefore, view the teachings of the Sikh tradition as a source of inspiration and guidance for their involvement in social action.

The role of religious beliefs in social action was also mentioned by some Muslim interviewees. One explained the philosophy of Islam by quoting an interpretation of the Qur'an. The quote was in Arabic, which he translated and explained as follows:

**'If you please a soul or a person who has been hurt, it is 1000 times better than going to the Ka'bah.' This means if you give a drink to someone who is thirsty for example. The building of the Ka'bah has been built by man but the person you have helped is made by God.**

By making reference to the importance placed on acting in a socially responsible way in the Islamic tradition, this interviewee highlighted the connection between religious belief and social action. More specifically, that involvement in social action to help others is a way for the individual to live in obedience to God's will.

A number of Jewish interviewees also spoke about the link between their religious beliefs and their involvement in social action. They explained that Judaism closely links religious beliefs and community life because to live according to Jewish law requires taking respective responsibility for one's family, one's neighbourhood, the Jewish community, and wider society. This emphasis on Jewish community life in religious teaching therefore motivated some interviewees to become involved in social action.

Some Hindu interviewees also spoke of the way that their religious beliefs affected their daily lives and subsequently their involvement in social action initiatives. One interviewee described Hinduism as, **"a philosophy, a way of life."** He went on to emphasise that **"respect for all living things"** was central to Hinduism and that this led to a concern with ecological issues.

For many people of faith, specific religious beliefs are a key reason for participation in social action. These beliefs inspire their initial involvement and sustain their long-term commitment. Another aspect of the role of religion in motivating social action is personal experience of faith. Some interviewees spoke of a defining moment in their lives when they made a commitment to their faith or when they felt called to undertake social action. Christians, and particularly female Christians, spoke of their faith experiences. One recalled:

**I prayed for purpose and direction. Then I was out with friends one day for a walk and went to their house for dinner. The man who runs the camp [the centre of her social action] was there. It was divine intervention, I was given something to do.**

Many Christian interviewees also drew attention to the role that their faith played in sustaining their involvement in social action and acknowledged God's help as a source of support and strength for their achievements. For example, when speaking of her work, a Christian woman said:

**I can do nothing but for the grace of God and his help. I don't see it as what I have done because of my brilliance. It is what God has allowed me to accomplish.**

For this interviewee and other Christians, a personal relationship with God plays a crucial part in their social action.

Some Sikhs also made reference to a personal faith experience which motivated their involvement in social action. For example, a Sikh leader described the time when he met the guru Sant Baba Puran Singh who asked him to work for spiritual revival among Sikhs in Leeds. As a result, he played a key role in establishing a new gurdwara in the city which is now an active place of worship and a base for social action projects in the city.

#### **RELIGION AS A MOTIVATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION**

The role of religion in motivating people's involvement in social action has two main components. For many, specific religious beliefs or teachings instruct or inspire them. Others are inspired by their personal faith and spiritual life which sustains their involvement in social action.

#### **The role of personal stories**

When explaining the reasons for their involvement in social action, many interviewees recalled an experience from their past or described their personal history. For example, some interviewees drew attention to their upbringing and to the values instilled in them when they were younger. One female activist working for a social action organisation expressed this by saying,

**[A]s a child growing up, I had a certain discipline and principles instilled in me. The respect I had for others was a reflection of my Catholic upbringing.**

Similarly, another activist traced her involvement in social action to her family having been, "**involved in city life.**" Such activists saw their early family life as crucial to the formation of their adult values and as having led to their current involvement in social action activities.

Early experiences and family life were also cited as the reason for the particular type of social action in which interviewees were involved. For example, a Jewish activist spoke of his upbringing and family background as guiding his voluntary work as an adult. He said that he had:

**...strong family links with this organisation. My grandfather was the chair of B'nai B'rith and my father was an officer of Leeds Jewish Representative Council.**

This family history meant that he valued Jewish community life and chose to support Jewish concerns as an adult. For another interviewee, it was a bad experience in his early life which influenced his social action as an adult. He spoke of his experience of inter-denominational relationships in Merseyside during the 1950s and '60s and said, **"there was a great division at this time and this total prejudice was echoed in my family life."** This experience directed him as an adult towards activities which were designed to facilitate cooperation between different Christian denominations.

In addition to speaking about early life experiences, interviewees, and particularly women, spoke about events in their adult life which precipitated their involvement in social action. These events were often personal crises following bereavement, retirement or divorce. For example, an interviewee spoke of the death of her husband just after they had both retired. This forced her to reconsider her plans for the future and she chose to begin fund-raising for Bosnian widows and their children living in refugee camps. She said that when she saw the way that extra money and clothes helped to improve these people's quality of life she thought, **"something good has come out of what happened."** Similarly, a Muslim interviewee described her experience of retirement as leading to her involvement in social action. She explained:

**I have one son who lives locally, but he and his wife work full-time, so I cannot see them during the day. My grandchildren are at school. So, when I retired I was lonely and I didn't have anything to do. Someone told me about the Milun [a women's centre] and I started to come along. It got me out of the house and gave me the opportunity to mix with other women. A worker here encouraged me to do some voluntary work. I get a lot out of this.**

Her story of progressing from attending a local women's centre to her involvement in voluntary work and the running of the centre was echoed by other female interviewees. These women had benefited from involvement in a social network and training opportunities and, as a result, wanted to ensure that others have the same opportunities in the future. Their motivation, therefore, stems from their understanding of and empathy with other women who face similar problems.

In addition to those who mentioned their personal history, some interviewees spoke of being motivated by the self-knowledge that they had skills and qualities which were suited to social action activities. Some, for example, made reference to the fact that they were good at supporting and encouraging other people. As a result, they had chosen to become involved in projects which enabled them to use these skills. Paid social

activists, in particular, drew attention to being personally suited to their work. For example, an activist employed to encourage local groups to establish their own social action initiatives said:

**I have always known that I could do this work, I can get people to do things...often when people have ideas, they just need encouragement and they can do it. I can get people to try and I see this as a gift.**

Interviewees also spoke of the personal satisfaction that they gained from being involved in social action. This motivated and encouraged them in their efforts and sustained their long-term commitment. As one female interviewee stated:

**It gives me pleasure to do things for other people, the community, for women, for organisations. I feel happy.**

Others spoke about the encouragement they found in evaluating the contribution that their social action makes to other people's lives, to society and to social justice. For example, some said that they had made a difference to others by equipping them with the skills to cope with their problems. For these activists, seeing the fruits of their work leads to a sense of achievement, and sustains and reinforces their commitment to the project.

Some interviewees also stated that their involvement in social action was motivated by the support they received from others. For example, some South Asian women interviewees drew attention to the fact that their families, and particularly their husbands, encouraged and backed their involvement in social action. This was important to them because it meant that they were not compromising their honour or that of their families by breaking with traditional expectations of women's behaviour.

#### **PERSONAL HISTORY AS A MOTIVATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION**

Interviewees gave many personal reasons for involvement in social action and these were specific to the individual who told them. Common themes did emerge, however, from the interviews. These include the role of family, times of crisis, personality and the encouragement of others.

#### **Socio-political reasons for social action**

In addition to religious beliefs and personal histories, the socio-political situation in Leeds was identified as motivating involvement in social action. Many spoke about the fact that they had observed particular social problems or inequalities in Leeds and felt compelled to work towards alleviating them. These problems included: gaps in service provision, such as a lack of social support for elderly people; contemporary issues, such as the increase in homelessness; and social injustices, such as racism. Their decision to take action to combat these problems was based on an ethical stance.

Many interviewees who belonged to minority faith or ethnic groups also stated that their involvement was a response to the social problems, such as discrimination and racism, that they and others face in their daily lives. For example, a Sikh woman felt that she had a responsibility to speak about the racism that she had experienced because,

**You cannot close your eyes when you have a multicultural society. Then problems will arise. Racial attacks and abuse are common, in the workplace, in the street, in this house, banging windows and ringing the bell.**

Her awareness that such problems are widespread led to her participation in voluntary work and in organisations which promote friendships between people of different faith and ethnic backgrounds in the city. Similarly, another activist said that her experiences of racism stimulated her involvement in social action. In this case, she was involved in a city-wide organisation which aims to combat racism through creating a space in which South Asian women can share experiences and talk about how to deal with the problems they face. This organisation also acts against the institutional racism which South Asian women face by working to change the attitudes held by statutory and voluntary bodies in the city. Both these interviewees were therefore acting in response to their personal experiences and their understanding of the socio-political situation in Leeds.

Interviewees also spoke of another motivation for their participation in social action initiatives which related to their experience of belonging to a minority group, that is, their desire to contribute to the life of their faith and/or ethnic group. For example, a Jewish youth worker described the reason for her involvement as follows:

**For me, the opportunity to work for my community was very important. Numbers in the community are dwindling. In the past the community has been bigger. People are drifting away. I wanted to play a role in fighting this as much as possible.**

Similarly, a director of a Jewish social action organisation described how she had accumulated experience in community development and social research and had chosen "**to use it for my community.**" For all Jewish interviewees, a strong commitment to other Jewish people motivated their involvement in social action.

A sense of community was also important to Hindu interviewees. In particular, they spoke of the importance of teaching young people about their Indian heritage and Hindu values. This was viewed as a way to ensure the continuation of community ties and traditions in the future. One interviewee explained that this work was important because, "**[i]n Leeds, Hindus are not surrounded by Hindu culture and, therefore, need to make a conscious effort to learn about Hinduism**". His involvement in social action was, therefore, motivated by the desire to support people as part of the Hindu community.

In contrast, some interviewees were critical of aspects of their faith and ethnic group and were subsequently seeking to change its policies or direction. For example, criticisms of existing gender relations were made by some Jewish, Muslim and Sikh interviewees. South Asian women in particular argued that male and conservative interpretations of cultural norms prevented them from achieving the degree of equality which they have been awarded by their religious faith. For example, a Muslim woman made the following statement:

**[a]t mosques, they don't like ladies there. We do pray, but we do this at home. If we go to the mosque, we pray in a separate section. Our religion says we get the same reward for prayer at home. It says women should pray at home, because of taking care of the children. It doesn't say, though, that women shouldn't go out, not work or not leave the house.**

It was her understanding that cultural practice was taking precedence over religious teachings which led to her involvement in a women's centre. A co-worker made a similar point about the Sikh tradition. She stated:

**The Sikh religion is a very forward religion. Women are considered to be equal to men. In theory, a woman can do what a man can do. This means that women can attend and take part in religious and social functions.**

She went on to point out that in practice women have not been encouraged to take on such roles. As a result, she saw her involvement in social action for the empowerment and education of women as necessary to ensure that they can take on the roles and responsibilities to which they are entitled. Some male South Asian interviewees spoke of their support for these aims. For example, an elderly Muslim leader and activist stated that centres for South Asian women were necessary because, "**[w]omen at home must be helped more. If there are two wheels, both wheels must make progress, or else it will not work.**" For this reason, he saw social action initiatives as crucial for the future empowerment of women in the city of Leeds .

#### **THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION AS A MOTIVATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION**

Many interviewees stated that the socio-political situation in Leeds motivated their involvement in social action. Most often, participation was a response to the poverty, marginality and discrimination which they had witnessed or experienced in the city. In response to this, they have taken an ethical stance against these problems and have involved themselves in initiatives to combat social ills. For many people with minority ethnicity there is an additional motivation. Many feel a sense of belonging with other people who share the same ethnicity and are subsequently committed to sustaining community life in the present and for future generations. Some are also committed to making changes to community life. These changes may be internal changes, such as empowering women, or external changes, such as the need to combat racism.

## **THE POTENTIAL FOR CO-OPERATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL ACTIVISTS** Each

social activist has his or her own reasons for becoming involved in social action. However, there are similarities between the accounts given by different people. These similarities are categorised in the table below as religious, personal and socio-political reasons.

<b>Religious reasons:</b>	<b>religious beliefs and teaching</b> <b>personal experience of faith</b>
<b>Personal reasons:</b>	<b>childhood and upbringing</b> <b>personal crisis</b> <b>personality</b> <b>support and encouragement of others</b>
<b>Social-political reasons</b>	<b>existence of social and economic need</b> <b>existence of racism and discrimination</b> <b>sharing an ethnic and faith identity</b>

This commonality suggests that individual social activists have the potential to empathise with each other's reasons for involvement in social action. This might enable them to find common ground for working together, for sharing their experiences, and for drawing strength from each other in the future.

### **Summary of Part II**

Part II of the Report has described the involvement of people of faith in many types of social action initiatives including social welfare provision, fund-raising, building social relationships, campaigning and regeneration. They support a variety of different social action organisations, including those based on religious beliefs, those based on shared faith and/or ethnic identity, and those based in a locality. They also participate in initiatives run by congregations and work as individuals in the statutory sector. Analysis suggests that there is potential for future co-operation between organisations, congregations and individual social activists in the city, particularly in terms of sharing expertise and experience. The potential for cooperation across faiths is discussed in Part III of the Report.

## **PART III**

### **MULTI-FAITH SOCIAL ACTION IN LEEDS**

The city of Leeds and the social action initiatives undertaken by people of faith within it were described in Parts I and II of the Report. The Report now turns to a discussion of the potential for establishing multi-faith social action initiatives in Leeds. First, it describes multi-faith initiatives presently operating in the city and then it reviews the opinions of faith leaders and representatives of congregations and social activists about multi-faith social action.

#### **3.1 MULTI-FAITH SOCIAL ACTION ORGANISATIONS**

Some of the social action organisations in which people of faith work are multi-faith. Organisations are described as multi-faith when members of its management committee, workers, or service users have different faiths. Below are six examples of multi-faith social action organisations in Leeds. These profiles highlight the different strategies they employ to ensure that people of different faiths are involved in their initiatives.

##### **Concord**

Concord aims to foster friendship, understanding and co-operation among people of different faiths in Leeds. It holds the following: regular meetings where people can participate in discussion groups; presentations where people can learn about different faiths; and inter-faith services where people can participate in shared worship. It is also involved in long-term projects which aim to further inter-faith understanding in the city. For example, it played an important role in establishing the Interfaith Resources Centre at Thomas Danby College which supports the teaching and learning of Religious Education in schools. In addition to this, Concord has drawn on the networks associated with its membership to promote dialogue and peaceful relationships in the city at times of potential social discord between people of different faiths.

Concord is, therefore, an example of a multi-faith organisation which has been set up to promote understanding between individuals with different religious beliefs and to address issues arising from religious diversity in Leeds.

##### **Sharing Care**

The organisation Sharing Care supports people with learning disabilities. It provides an Information and Advice Service, produces a regular newsletter and co-ordinates a network in which volunteers and people with learning difficulties meet regularly for leisure activities such as swimming. This enables people with learning difficulties to become more involved in city life.

Sharing Care's staff, users and volunteers are from a variety of faith, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The organisation is structured so that this diversity is recognised and respected. Measures adopted to ensure this include the following: an equal opportunities policy supported by everybody within the organisation; the provision of language support for people whose first language is not English or who have difficulty in speaking English; a commitment to publicising their service in the public spaces, community centres and places of worship of all faith and ethnic groups in the city; and the announcement of forthcoming religious festivals celebrated by people associated with the organisation.

Sharing Care is, therefore, an example of a social action organisation which has aims and strategies to ensure that it is accessible to people of all faith and ethnic backgrounds. In this way, it reflects the multicultural and multi-faith diversity of Leeds.

### **The Milun Centre**

The Milun Centre is a drop-in centre for South Asian women. The word 'Milun' means 'togetherness' and the Centre provides a space in which women can socialise, develop skills and access training. For example, the Centre runs classes in keep fit, dressmaking, typing, English language skills and confidence- building. It also encourages women to obtain qualifications at local Further Education institutions.

Milun is open to all South Asian women and its policies and practices encourage women of different faith, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to use the facilities and contribute to its running. For example, it employs workers who can speak a range of languages including English, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. It also celebrates different religious festivals during the year. These are Baisakhi (a Sikh festival), Christmas (a Christian festival), Diwali (a Hindu and Sikh festival), and Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitr (Muslim festivals). In this way, the Centre seeks to include and make all women feel welcome.

Milun is, therefore, a social action organisation which aims to empower women so that they can build independent social networks and secure for themselves a better quality of life. Moreover, like the previous examples, it is a multi-faith organisation which actively seeks to involve people of different faiths. It differs from Sharing Care and Concord, however, because it organises on the basis of gender and South Asian ethnicity.

### **Tempest Road**

Christian-Muslim co-operation in Beeston started in a modest way when a group of Muslims began to use a room at the Methodist church for their mosque school and as a day care centre for elderly people. Over time, the Christians and Muslims involved realised that they shared concerns about the problems faced by local

people and particularly about their lack of access to public spaces. As a result, they developed plans to improve facilities in the area. They established a more formal partnership and submitted a joint funding proposal to the Single Regeneration Board. They hope to begin the next stage of the project soon.

Tempest Road is, therefore, an example of a multi-faith initiative involving people of different faiths within a local area. These people have been brought together because they live in the same locality and share similar concerns and social action objectives. The fact that they live in close proximity enables those involved to meet regularly and establish close, effective working relationships.

### **Nishkam Sevak Jatha Gurdwara**

The Nishkam Sevak Jatha Gurdwara in Beeston is a multifunctional institution which organises worship and runs a range of social action projects. Some of these projects are designed to serve those Sikhs who are associated with the gurdwara, while others serve a wider clientele. An example of the latter is the provision of twice weekly advice and consultation sessions by a Punjabi-speaking worker from LCC's Community Benefits and Rights Department. These sessions are attended by Punjabi-speaking Muslims and Sikhs.

Although this initiative is located at the premises of one faith group, it is an example of multi-faith social action because different faiths can and do access this service. In such cases, multi-faith co-operation is facilitated by the fact that groups share ethnic and linguistic heritage.

### **Churches and Neighbourhood Action (CANA)**

CANA was established by Barnardos in 1986 to support local development initiatives undertaken by churches and community groups in disadvantaged areas of West Yorkshire. It is involved in many local projects such as playschemes, tenants' groups, youth work, and projects to alleviate homelessness. It also works to facilitate new social action ventures and to empower social activists through the provision of skills training for members of churches and local groups.

Barnardos was established as a Christian organisation in the nineteenth century. Although CANA employees are no longer required to be Christians, they must be, "in sympathy with working with churches." However, CANA recognises that in a multi-faith city like Leeds, local social action initiatives often include people of many different faiths. As a result, the organisation is presently considering how to extend its network of contacts and service provision so that other faith groups can participate in future initiatives.

CANA is, therefore, an example of a faith-based social action organisation which is considering organisational change in response to the multi-faith nature of Leeds.

## MULTI-FAITH SOCIAL ACTION ORGANISATIONS

In Leeds, a range of social action initiatives involves people of different faiths. The examples described above show that there are variations in the ways in which they are structured. Some employ workers of different faiths or have people of different faiths on their management committee, while others provide services for people of different faiths. Some organisations were designed to be multi-faith from the beginning, while others are coincidentally multi-faith because they provide a service which is accessed by people of different faiths. Some organisations aim to reflect the multi-faith nature of Leeds, while others aim to empower groups of people on the basis of shared ethnicity, common language and locality. This suggests that there are many possible ways in which to organise multi-faith social action ventures in the future.

### 3.2 CONGREGATIONS AND MULTI-FAITH SOCIAL ACTION

Part II of the Report described the contribution that congregations make to local areas and to city life through their involvement in social action. Drawing on information gathered by a questionnaire survey, this section examines the present involvement of congregations in multi-faith social action and explores the views of faith leaders and representatives towards different faiths working together on joint social action ventures in the future. It also highlights issues which are considered influential to decisions about future involvement in multi-faith social action.

#### **The level of involvement of congregations in multi-faith social action**

In Leeds, only half of congregations had experience of involvement in multi-faith initiatives. The level of involvement varied between congregations. Just under half (45 per cent) stated that a few members were involved, while a few (3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively) stated that up to half of their membership and more than half were involved. In a further 45 per cent of congregations, no member is involved in multi-faith social action. This is depicted in the table on the next page.

**Table 3.01 The level of involvement in multi-faith social action**

Proportion of the congregation involved	n = 173	Percentage
None	78	45
A few	77	45
Up to half	5	3
More than half	3	2
No answer	10	6

The proportion of congregations involved in multi-faith social action is, therefore, low when compared to their involvement in other types of social action initiatives. This suggests that, at present, involvement in

multi-faith social action is undertaken by a few individuals and is not organised by congregations. Additional comments by some leaders and representatives illustrate this point. One wrote, "[s]ome members of our congregation do have links with people of other faiths but this is on a personal level." Another contrasted the involvement of congregations and individuals:

**If an initiative has [the congregation's] name on it, then all those involved are of the Christian faith. However, many individuals in [the congregation] work in spheres of social action alongside those of other faiths, in situations where religion is almost irrelevant, in a voluntary capacity or sometimes a paid job.**

A third felt that the reasons why individuals rather than congregations are involved in multi-faith initiatives is because, "[i]t is often quicker and easier to work together as individuals rather than as faith communities." Taken together, these comments suggest that at present there is an emphasis on the role of the individual rather than the congregation in multi-faith social action projects.

### **Future involvement in multi-faith social action**

Many faith leaders and representatives showed an enthusiasm for future knowledge about multi-faith social action in Leeds, as shown in the table below. Just under three quarters (73 per cent) expressed an interest in hearing about the ways in which joint initiatives could be co-ordinated in the future. Although this interest does not constitute a commitment to becoming involved in multi-faith social action in the future, it does indicate a willingness to consider involvement.

**Table 3.02 Interest in future multi-faith social action in Leeds**

<b>Interest</b>	<b>n = 173</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	126	73
No	35	20
No answer	12	7

Congregations which already have links with other faith groups are in the strongest position to develop joint social action ventures. In this respect, almost one fifth of faith leaders and representatives (19 per cent) said that they would like their congregation to develop existing relationships with other faiths through working together on social action initiatives. That is, they would like to progress from interfaith relationships to joint social action. The leaders or representatives of congregations which are not presently involved in multi-faith social action were also open to the idea. Over half (58 per cent) said that they might encourage involvement, just over one quarter (27 per cent) said that they would positively encourage participation, while only a few (5 per cent) said that they would not encourage their congregation to participate in future multi-faith initiatives. This is depicted in the table below.

**Table 3.03 Potential for future involvement among those congregations who are not presently involved in multi-faith social action**

<b>Faith leader would encourage involvement</b>	<b>n = 78</b>	<b>Percentage of those not presently involved</b>
Yes	21	27
No	4	5
Possibly	45	58
No answer	8	10

The majority of leaders and representatives of congregations which are not involved in multi-faith social action are not opposed to the idea of their congregation's future participation in such projects. They do not, however, envisage encouraging multi-faith social action in all circumstances and would take into consideration a range of factors. These are explored in detail below.

**Issues relevant to decision-making about multi-faith social action**

Leaders and representatives consider a variety of issues to be relevant when making decisions about future involvement in multi-faith social action. The majority of leaders (83 per cent) considered locality to be an important determinant. Among this group, there were differences between those congregations located in multi-faith areas and those in non-multi-faith areas. Just under half (47 per cent) of faith leaders and representatives described their area as non-multi-faith and, as a result, considered the option of organising joint initiatives with other faiths to be problematic. Additional comments made by faith leaders and representatives illustrate this point. For example, one wrote, "**[w]hilst sympathetic to other faith/cultural issues, [this area] does have very few people with other faith/cultures.**" Other leaders and representatives referred to a combination of faith and ethnicity when describing their locality. One wrote:

**This is a very small congregation on a housing-estate, where other races and faith communities simply are not there. The negative answers do not imply a lack of interest but simply lack of relevance to our congregation.**

The comments made about non-multi-faith areas suggest that when people use the term "local" or "this area", they are referring to the specific area of Leeds in which they live or in which their congregation is situated. They are not referring to the city of Leeds or to the metropolitan district of Leeds because these areas are multi-faith. One leader recognised this in the following statement:

**I feel that social action is something that faith communities could and should be sharing in together, but this is not a multi-faith area, so to work in this local community on a multi-faith basis would involve "importing" members of other faith communities, and I am not entirely convinced of the value of that. However, social action within, for example, the city centre, which is used by all residents of Leeds at some time, would be a way of sharing honestly with other faith communities.**

Even though this leader saw the potential for city-wide initiatives to be organised on a multi-faith basis, many do not consider multi-faith social action to be a viable option for congregations located in non-multi-faith areas. This is primarily an issue for Christian congregations, since the majority of people who belong to minority faiths are located in multi-faith areas.

In contrast, 36 per cent of congregations described themselves as being located in multi-faith areas. The leaders and representatives of these congregations saw the sharing of locality as a spur to involvement in multi-faith social action because they felt it was important to work with other local people.

When these two responses are considered together, it shows that locality is considered crucial to the issue of whether multi-faith co-operation is a viable option. Whether congregations envisage working with other faiths or not is, therefore, partly dependent on whether there are other faiths in close proximity. This is because congregations primarily relate to locality and it is the favoured basis for organising social action.

Moreover, only a few (7 per cent) faith leaders and representatives said that they would need the permission or encouragement of faith leaders outside their congregation before becoming involved in multi-faith social action. This suggests that decisions about future participation will be taken by individual congregations and not by denominational or national groupings. Locality can therefore be identified as the locus of the organisation of social action.

The issue of resources, and more specifically, a lack of resources, was identified as relevant to decisions about future involvement in multi-faith social action by just over half the faith leaders and representatives (53 per cent). Among this group, there were differing views about the impact of the lack of resources. For example, just over a quarter (28 per cent) said that their congregation did not have the resources to meet local needs and so they would encourage co-operation with other faiths to meet these needs. These views represent a pragmatic approach to the issue of multi-faith social action. However, a further quarter of faith leaders (25 per cent) said that because they lacked time and resources, they could not become involved in any more projects. This reflects the fact that faith leaders and representatives have many demands on their time and, as a result, they have to prioritise projects in order to work effectively.

A small proportion (6 per cent) of faith leaders and representatives said that their work on social issues is inseparable from religious belief and, therefore, they could not support initiatives which would involve working with other faiths who have different beliefs. For these leaders and representatives, the continuity between beliefs and action prevents them from considering participation in multi-faith initiatives.

For others, beliefs have implications for the way in which joint initiatives are organised. A small proportion (3 per cent) of faith leaders and representatives stated that their congregations hold beliefs which prevent women and men from working together. However, they did not suggest that this would block multi-faith cooperation. Rather they felt that this was an issue which would have to be accommodated. For example, in some circumstances, it might be necessary to organise projects in which men and women work separately.

Other practical concerns about different faiths working together were raised. For example, a few (8 per cent) were concerned that language barriers would restrict multi-faith co-operation. Others (5 per cent) commented that their future involvement in multi-faith social action would be limited by their elderly or small congregation. One leader explained this by saying, "**we are a small congregation struggling to grow and all are resources are concentrated here at present.**" Another said:

**[it] is a very small congregation and the majority are elderly people from 65 onwards. Many of them rather need help than they can give. Therefore there is an interest in these issues and hardly any reservation. But they feel too old for activities.**

Leaders and representatives, therefore, believe that there are some practical issues which limit their congregation's future participation in multi-faith initiatives. However, the fact that most are not opposed to the idea of multi-faith social action in principle suggests that joint projects could be developed in the future if appropriate strategies are agreed.

**Table 3.04 Issues relevant to decision-making about multi-faith social action**

<b>Relevant issues</b>	<b>Number*</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Congregation located in a non-multi-faith area	82	47
Congregation located in a multi-faith area	62	36
The need to share resources	49	28
Prevented by lack of time and resources	43	25
The existence of present relationships with other faith	33	19
Language barriers	14	8
Permission from faith leaders required	12	7
The role of religious belief	11	6
Other	11	6
<u>Prohibition on men and women working together</u>	5	3

\* Respondents could give more than one answer, therefore, the number of congregations does not equal 173.

#### **Areas of concern considered appropriate for multi-faith co-operation**

Given this interest in future multi-faith ventures, it is worth exploring the areas of concern which are considered appropriate for this type of social action. The vast majority of faith leaders and representatives (over 90 per cent) said that they were willing to co-operate with other faiths on all social action issues. Small numbers specified, however, that they were not willing to co-operate with people of different faiths on

particular activities. These activities were youth work (9 per cent), worship (5 per cent), campaigning for peace (5 per cent), international aid (5 per cent), care for elderly people (4 per cent) and women's issues (4 per cent). This is shown in the table below.

**Table 3.05 Types of social action considered unsuitable for multi-faith initiatives**

<b>Social action activity</b>	<b>Number of congregations*</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Poverty	2	1
Youth work	15	9
Homelessness	4	2
Health	5	3
Support for families	4	2
Crime prevention	6	3
Care for elderly people	6	4
Campaigning for peace	8	5
Immigration and asylum	6	3
Anti-racism	4	2
International aid	8	5
Women's issues	7	4
Alcohol and drug awareness	5	3
Other	9	5

\* Respondents could give more than one answer, therefore, the number of congregations does not equal 173.

This information suggests that there are many areas of concern on which congregations would be willing to work together and few areas in which there is an unwillingness to consider initiating joint social action.

### **The importance of multi-faith social action**

Faith leaders and representatives assigned priority to multi-faith social action in the light of its potential benefits and limitations. Roughly one third of leaders said that multi-faith social action was a medium priority (34 per cent), slightly fewer (29 per cent) said that it was a low priority, a smaller group (20 per cent) said that it was a high priority, and the smallest group (14 per cent) said that it was not relevant. This is shown in the next table.

**Table 3.05 Prioritising multi-faith social action**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>n = 173</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High	34	20
Medium	58	34
Low	50	29
Not relevant	25	14
No answer	6	3

Roughly half the faith leaders and representatives, therefore, awarded multi-faith social action some status (high or medium priority), while the other half considered it less important or not relevant. In other words, there was a spread of opinions as to the importance assigned to involvement in multi-faith initiatives. Overall, this suggests that the majority of congregations would balance involvement in multi-faith social action against other aims and objectives. This suggests a pragmatic approach towards decisions about future participation in multi-faith ventures.

### **CONGREGATIONS AND MULTI-FAITH SOCIAL ACTION**

At present, multi-faith social action is mostly undertaken by individual members of congregations. However, there is a willingness on the part of congregations to consider involvement in multi-faith initiatives. Most view multi-faith co-operation as a feasible option for future ventures in all areas of social action. However, this willingness is qualified by a number of practical considerations mainly related to locality, the make-up of congregations and a lack of resources.

### **3.3 SOCIAL ACTIVISTS AND MULTI-FAITH INITIATIVES**

Drawing on the interviews conducted with a range of social activists in the city, this section discusses the views of social activists about the potential benefits and difficulties of working in a multi-faith way.

#### **Support for multi-faith social action**

At present, few activists in Leeds work with people who belong to different faith groups. Only half the interviewees had formally met people of different faiths in the course of their involvement in social action or through their faith group. Where they had, meetings had taken place through a range of activities including involvement in interfaith debates, visits to places of worship and joint social action projects. Of these interviewees, only a few reported that they had worked regularly with people of different faiths through their involvement in social action projects. This means that while some interviewees commented on their experience of working with people of different faiths, others commented on their understanding of multi-faith social action from their view as non-participants.

None of the interviewees were intrinsically opposed to the idea of working with other faiths and many expressed enthusiasm for multi-faith projects being established in Leeds in the future. This was reflected in comments such as, "**I think it doesn't happen as much as it should, because I believe it can't happen too much!**" and "**[t]he more the better.**" Some went on to express the belief that not enough has been done to

build up multi-faith links in the city in the past and, therefore, the potential for co-operation in a multi-faith, multi-ethnic city has not been realised. They felt that this has potentially harmful implications for city-life because people have not been provided with the opportunity to meet, learn about, or work with people of different faith and ethnic backgrounds.

The vast majority of interviewees supported the idea of multi-faith social action and said that they would like to see initiatives developed in the future. They also spoke of the potential benefits and limitations of such initiatives. Their views are outlined below

### **The role of religious belief**

Many Christian interviewees spoke about the role of their religious beliefs in decisions about future participation in multi-faith initiatives. On the one hand, they stated that there was a basis for joint social action in the city since people of different faiths share ethical values and a common commitment to social action. On the other hand, many highlighted the fact that their religious beliefs cannot be reduced to ethical values and a commitment to social action. For these interviewees, any future co-operation with other faiths must, therefore, take place on the basis of action and not shared worship. A female activist said:

**I would be happy to work together in areas we had in common, but not if anything went against Christian beliefs as I understand them. I do not believe in interfaith worship, but social action on a human level is fine. For example, help for the homeless. It wouldn't change what I believe as a Christian.**

Some of these interviewees further believed that a concern about protecting religious beliefs is also important for people of other faiths. For example, a Christian leader stated:

**Every faith has beliefs regarding their fellow man, but all are created by God and belong to one family. The greatest commandments at the centre of all religions are, 'Love thy God' and, 'Love thy neighbour.' Love thy neighbour is about charity. [Multi-faith social action is] also limited by our beliefs. All faiths have a body of beliefs. These differences mean that we can't move totally towards others as our own might be destroyed.**

Non-Christians, however, rarely mentioned this as a consideration. This suggests that a concern to protect the integrity of religious beliefs is distinctive to Christian social activists and may be related to the emphasis they place on religious beliefs as a key motivation for involvement in social action (as outlined in Part H of the Report).

## **Practical considerations**

When evaluating the potential for multi-faith initiatives, many social activists considered the likely effects of working with people of different faiths. For example, those involved in service provision deliberated whether co-operating on a multi-faith basis would increase benefits for their service users. They concluded that, if this was the case, they would want to pursue multi-faith options.

Roughly one third of interviewees saw shared social concerns, such as youth and women's issues, social justice and racism, as providing reasons for people of different faiths to work together in Leeds. In addition, they viewed multi-faith co-operation as a means by which they could pool resources to act more effectively on these concerns. For example, one Christian activist described multi-faith social action as, **"more people, more experience, more extensive contacts to co-operate on vitally important issues and activities."** Multi-faith social action is, therefore, viewed by some interviewees as providing new opportunities in which people can work more effectively to achieve common social action objectives.

Another opportunity offered by multi-faith social action is access to 'outside' training and expertise. Interviewees spoke of the benefits to be gained from drawing on expertise outside their faith group. For example, one spoke of her previous experience of co-operating with 'outside' groups and stated that she would welcome the opportunity to work with others in the future. In this case, Christians wanted to support elderly people in their area suffering from social isolation. As they were unsure about how to do this, they approached a social worker in a secular organisation who suggested that they establish a luncheon club. The social worker was able to offer expert advice and provide them with the names and addresses of potential users. By working together, they were able to establish a successful project for local people.

Some interviewees drew attention to the particular benefits which minority ethnic groups could gain from involving themselves in multi-faith initiatives. For example, a Sikh leader stated that minority ethnic groups in Leeds are presently coping with problems of isolation and a lack of resources. He believed that many longer-established groups and organisations in the city already have the skills and resources which could support and empower them. Moreover, he stated that inter-group co-operation could be mutually beneficial. For example, if one congregation could hire a minibus from another, one would gain access to transport, while the other would receive a rental fee. Co-operation between people of different faiths is, therefore, viewed as a means through which to derive mutual social and financial benefits.

Interviewees also believed that involvement in multi-faith initiatives would enable local people of different faith backgrounds to meet one another. They pointed out that, at present, many social action initiatives bring people together who live in close proximity. When initiatives are established in multi-faith areas, they can

serve different faith groups. For example, one interviewee had organised a local play scheme during the school holidays on behalf of an ecumenical Christian organisation. She recognised that many of the residents in this area were of different faiths and that a multi-faith playscheme had the potential to contribute to the future development of social relationships between local people. As a result, the scheme was extended to include provision for all children in the locality. In this way, multi-faith co-operation in local areas was identified as a means to achieve social action goals and to develop good social relationships.

Christian interviewees who do not live or work in multi-faith areas also felt that locality was an important factor for multi-faith ventures. They saw their locality as limiting future participation in multi-faith ventures because working with people of other faiths would necessitate involvement in a Leeds-wide initiative. From their past experience, they believed that such initiatives would be unlikely to receive widespread backing. One Christian leader said:

**A tiny proportion [of the congregation] get involved in activities held in different parts of the city.**

**...The congregation have to own things themselves if their involvement is to mean anything.**

Many of those who presently work in non-multi-faith localities, therefore, view multi-faith initiatives as impractical. They believe that social action must continue to be organised within a locality because this is the most effective way to motivate people.

Other interviewees also considered multi-faith social action as impractical. Their projects were well-established and organised by an individual faith group and, therefore, they did not feel that their work could be extended to include multi-faith involvement. For example, a Christian activist who expressed agreement with the idea of multi-faith social action, ranked it as a low priority for his organisation. He explained, "**it is not what [our organisation] is here to do, as our mission statement shows.**" In such cases, it is not felt advisable to change the aims and organisational structures of existing social action initiatives because this would detract from their purpose.

Other social activists argued that involvement in multi-faith initiatives would be detrimental to their organisation. A Jewish women's group had discussed setting up multi-faith links with other women's groups, for example, but had rejected the idea because they believed it would undermine the aims of their group. One of its members stated:

**I think that many members felt aware of the fact that we could be seen as, and nobody wants to be labelled, "another feminist group" and it could destroy the very fine balance that we have...There are many orthodox women who are gradually overcoming generations of conditioning, seeing what they are doing by associating with this group of women, that by conditioning is, well, blasphemous ...We are a minority and we need to look after ourselves, finding our own spiritual roots.**

Others interviewees involved in service provision also felt that their participation in multi-faith social action would be inappropriate and have potentially harmful repercussions for its users. For example, a Sikh leader stated:

**LCC had a project to build a vast nursing home for all communities with Unity Housing. I opposed this as I felt it was not practical. We [Sikhs] detest smoking and other communities might wish to smoke. We have special needs when it comes to food. How could they ensure that our requirements were met without segregation? Without creating a dozen kitchens?... Also people might not speak English and so barriers exist.**

For these interviewees, involvement in multi-faith social action was not a viable option because they envisaged negative repercussions for their users.

Social activists, therefore, expressed concerns about a range of practical considerations. They said it would be practical to work with those who share their objectives, for example, on the same issue-based campaigns or in local neighbourhood schemes. However, some said that across faith co-operation would be less appropriate in non-multi-faith localities and in some areas of social action, such as service provision for elderly people.

### **Responses to the socio-political situation**

In addition to religious beliefs and practical considerations, the socio-political situation in Leeds was identified as a key determinant of future participation in multi-faith initiatives. Many interviewees saw multi-faith social action as a positive way to respond to the diversity of faiths within the city. For example, one Christian leader said, "**Leeds is a multiracial, multi-faith city [so] multi-faith social action would be good.**" Other interviewees viewed specific socio-political factors as creating a need for future initiatives in the city which involve people of different faiths. For example, to contribute to social relationships and to combat racism.

Multi-faith initiatives were viewed as a means to create opportunities for people of different faiths to meet and establish social relationships in the city. However, some interviewees had encountered practical difficulties in establishing these relationships. A Jewish activist, for example, pointed out that:

**It is the problem of making contact. The Jewish community is easy to find, we are in the phonebook. With others it is not always as easy. Contact is made through two individuals meeting, maybe at work or because they live next door. We build on this.**

Many interviewees, therefore, recognise that the process of building relationships takes time and that this potentially limits joint initiatives in the near future. They also highlighted the difficulty of initiating this process. A Christian activist said,

**If...Sikhs, for example,...said "Let's work together" that would be great. But would it happen? We don't know how to make contact.**

This suggests that a dilemma exists for many social activists. On the one hand, they recognise that multi-faith initiatives would facilitate the development of social relationships across faiths. On the other hand, they know that the lack of existing relationships limits the development of these initiatives.

Many interviewees also view multi-faith ventures as having the potential to reduce prejudice and racism in the city. They believe that these problems currently stem from misinformation and social isolation and, therefore, if people from different groups got to know each other, they would reconsider stereotypes and overcome prejudices. The possible benefits of multi-faith social action as a means of strengthening relationships and fighting against racism was most frequently mentioned by interviewees belonging to minority ethnic groups. For example, a Gujarati Hindu social activist said:

**We have got to overcome our differences. This issue has not been tackled yet. It can only be tackled through awareness. This type of project [multi-faith social action] could help.**

Similarly, an interviewee at the Milun Centre viewed multi-faith social action in a positive light because:

**It is the only way to find out about each other; what they believe, what they think. If you don't meet, you might sit at home thinking, "They may not like us, they might not want to meet with us." If you do meet, you will find out what they want and can tell them about yourself.**

In addition, some 'white' Christian interviewees saw multi-faith social action as a way to reduce prejudice and racism within their own groups. One activist said, "[i]ts about getting over fear, the fear of the other." Multi-faith social action is therefore viewed by many social activists as a way to achieve better social relations and further understanding in a multi-faith, multi-ethnic city.

Some interviewees saw multi-faith initiatives as offering particular benefits to minority groups. Just over half of the interviewees who belonged to minority ethnic and faith groups spoke of the great potential for multi-faith co-operation between minorities, without those Christians who belong to the majority ethnic group. Activists belonging to minority groups believed that the shared experience of being part of a minority meant that they had similar aims, such as community survival, and faced similar issues, such as discrimination. For example, a Hindu activist said, **"I would say that it is essential that ethnic minorities work together to ensure their own futures."**

Moreover, minority alliances were identified by some interviewees as a way to draw on mutual understanding. For example, a Jewish youth worker described a time when two Sikh women from a local college attended a Jewish youth meeting. She recalled their recognition of cultural similarities.

**At the group, someone started to talk about a sick grandparent. One of these [Sikh] women shared her experience of a sick relative. The similar family approach to sickness showed that ethnicity played a big role for both communities.**

The perception of shared understanding is supplemented by the belief that some minority groups already possess the relevant resources and knowledge to support others. For example, a Jewish activist spoke of the potential for a well-established minority group in the city to offer advice and support to other minority groups. He stated:

**we want to encourage relationships with other minority organisations who are in the position we were in a couple of generations back. We have a lot in common with these groups as well as many differences.**

These interviewees, therefore, saw co-operation for mutual support and empowerment between minority ethnic and faith groups as a potential benefit of multi-faith initiatives.

Some minority ethnic and faith interviewees also spoke of the importance of balancing the survival of their group as a distinct ethnic and cultural community in the city against their support for future participation in multi-faith initiatives. They argued that while all faith groups must work to sustain their community life, minority groups have extra pressures such as the maintenance of community language skills among young people. An interviewee at the Gujarati Hindu Temple said:

**If we do not do anything for our own community, nobody else will. We are a long way from home. We are influenced by many other spheres. We want to keep some of these things at bay and not forget our roots.**

Other interviewees expressed concern that involvement in multi-faith social action might undermine the unity of minority faith and ethnic groups. A Jewish youth worker stated, for example, that older Jewish people feared that involvement in multi-faith initiatives might lead to inter-marriage and a weakening of community ties. She said:

**A lot of our community are very afraid of assimilation. I do not think there is this risk of intermarriage simply by putting young people of different faiths together. Older people are frightened and I can see where they're coming from.**

A full-time professional working for a Jewish welfare organisation described the implications of balancing community continuity and other projects:

**It is important to share and it is important to be separate. If sharing means losing our cultural hegemony, then no. If sharing experience means that others can avoid our mistakes and we can be strong together, then yes.**

Minority groups, therefore, offset the benefits of multi-faith social action against its possible effects on community survival. In some situations, investment of time and resources in the faith or ethnic group will take priority over multi-faith initiatives. The commitment to the continuation of the community may therefore detract from their participation in joint initiatives.

Another issue for minority faith and ethnic groups was the impact of international politics on the local situation. This was mentioned by one third of interviewees from minority groups. As stated in Part I of the Report, many people in Leeds have links with other parts of the world. For example, South Asian people in the city have links with South Asia through relatives or organisations. As a result, they know about events taking place in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan and, when this involves a conflict between groups in these countries, there may be tension between local people. For example, if there are problems between Hindus and Muslims in India, Hindus and Muslims in Leeds may feel suspicious of one another. Interviewees drew attention to the politics of Israel-Palestine (in terms of Jewish-Muslim relations), Iraq and Libya (in terms of civic-Muslim relations), and Pakistan and India (in terms of Hindu-Sikh and Hindu-Muslim relations) as having the potential to negatively impact on relationships in Leeds. These conflicts were, therefore, often identified as limiting the future potential of multi-faith ventures in the city.

Despite the fact that many interviewees focused on the benefits of minorities working together, they also acknowledged that it was important to establish contacts and work with other organisations and groups in the city. All made references to the fact that they already work with others such as Christian groups, secular organisations and bodies such as LCC, Social Services, and the Labour Party. These interviewees, therefore, recognised that there would be socio-political benefits arising from multi-faith initiatives between different minority groups and majority-minority groups.

<b>MULTI-FAITH SOCIAL ACTION</b>	
Individual activists saw multi-faith social action as a complex issue and foresaw that a range of issues would affect their decision about involvement. These issues related to religious beliefs, practical objectives and socio-political considerations. They are summarised below.	
<b>Religious considerations</b>	<b>The role of religious belief</b>
<b>Practical considerations</b>	<b>The benefits of co-operation to meet shared objectives</b>
	<b>The benefits of co-operation as neighbours in a locality</b>
	<b>The aims of individual organisations</b>
	<b>Appropriate service provision</b>
<b>Social-political considerations</b>	<b>Leeds is a multi-faith city</b>
	<b>Social relationships in the city</b>
	<b>Reducing prejudice</b>
	<b>The continuation of minority groups</b>
	<b>Potential alliance of minority groups</b>
	<b>The impact of international politics</b>

### **Summary of Part HI**

People of different faiths are already working together to achieve social action goals in Leeds. They are drawn together by living in the same city, sharing the same concerns, or by other factors which they have in common, such as ethnic background. At present, working together most often occurs when an organisation has a multi-faith membership or as a result of personal links between people of different faiths. **While** people do not view multi-faith social action as the answer to all the problems faced by the city, they do believe that it has a role to play in the future. On this basis, they are willing to consider involvement in multi-faith initiatives in the future as a way to improve city life.

## PART IV

### WAYS FORWARD

#### 4.1 PEOPLE OF FAITH, SOCIAL ACTION AND THE CITY OF LEEDS

Leeds is a multi-faith, multi-ethnic city. It faces a range of challenges in the lead up to the year 2000. Social action initiatives work to meet these challenges and, in the process, they make a significant contribution to the life of the city as a whole and to the vitality of local areas.

People of faith are involved in a range of social action initiatives in Leeds. They concentrate their efforts in five key areas: social welfare provision; fund-raising; building social relationships; campaigning; and projects to regenerate inner-city localities. They undertake this work as individuals employed in the statutory and voluntary sector, in social action organisations associated with particular faith groups, and in congregational initiatives. Some of these projects operate on a city-wide basis, others work in local areas of Leeds.

At present, only a few of these social action projects involve people of different faiths working together. However, many social activists believe that multi-faith initiatives should be established in Leeds in the future. Whether they become involved in multi-faith social action or not will depend on a range of religious, practical, and socio-political considerations. This suggests that the potential for future multi-faith ventures in Leeds depends on the development of appropriate strategies.

#### 4.2 THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE MULTI-FAITH INITIATIVES IN LEEDS

Multi-faith co-operation can develop intentionally or coincidentally. A social action project is multi-faith by intention if it has been established to facilitate people of different faiths working together to achieve common aims from the beginning. In contrast, a social action project is coincidentally multi-faith if those involved have joined together for reasons other than forming a multi-faith project. For example, an initiative may be coincidentally multi-faith if it has been established as a local project in an area where neighbours of different faiths share common concerns. Other projects might incorporate a combination of these two approaches if those involved have multi-faith motivations and share common concerns and social action goals. Intentional and coincidental forms of multi-faith initiatives are summarised below.

### **INTENTIONAL MULTI-FAITH CO-OPERATION**

The ideal of multi-faith co-operation *leads to* a multi-faith social action project being established

### **COINCIDENTAL MULTI-FAITH CO-OPERATION**

Social action objectives *lead to* a social action project being established which is multi-faith by default

At present, the majority of initiatives in Leeds which involve people of different faiths working together are coincidentally multi-faith. This means that people of different faiths are involved as a consequence of other decisions. For example, people of different faiths are involved in the Milun Centre because it works to empower South Asian women, and South Asian women have different faith affiliations.

In the future, multi-faith projects in the city may continue to develop coincidentally. However, the potential also exists for them to develop intentionally. Issue-based projects, or projects organised around ethnic groups or local problems, are most likely to involve coincidental multi-faith co-operation as their memberships are brought together by concerns other than a shared multi-faith ideal. In contrast, congregations are most likely to become involved in intentional multi-faith projects because their social action initiatives are linked to an existing group which worships together. When they choose to associate with other groups, it is therefore likely to be based on a conscious decision to work in a multi-faith way. This is most likely to happen when congregations are located in multi-faith areas or where they lack the resources to achieve their social action goals. In contrast, individual activists might become involved in either type of multi-faith initiative. This is because their decision about whether or not to participate will be made on the basis of a range of factors including religious beliefs, practical concerns and socio-political aims.

Given that many people of faith express an interest in becoming involved in such initiatives in the future, and that some forms of multi-faith initiative may be more appropriate than others for different situations, the next section outlines a series of strategies for developing multi-faith ventures.

#### **4.3 MULTI-FAITH WAYS OF WORKING**

There are different ways to advance multi-faith co-operation in Leeds. Multi-faith aspects may be incorporated into existing social action projects or new multi-faith initiatives may be established. The incorporation of multi-faith aspects might take one of the following forms: extending an existing initiative to include multi-faith aspects; joining an existing multi-faith organisation; or forming partnerships with secular

organisations. New multi-faith initiatives may be established in integrated or federated forms. These approaches are explored below.

**Join an existing multi-faith group:** Individuals wishing to work in a multi-faith way could join an existing multi-faith initiative whose aims they share.

**Extend an existing social action project:** A social action organisation which currently works within a faith group or serves the needs of a faith group could extend their initiative to include people of other faiths. Such a development is likely to affect the structure, direction, and culture of the organisation. This is because involvement with other people brings fresh ideas and challenges, and different ways of working. Before taking this step, organisations should be willing to make changes in the delegation of power and decision-making authority of their organisation. As the extension of an existing project might result in radical internal changes, it might be more appropriate to move in stages. For example, organisations could begin by making one part of the project or one campaign multi-faith, rather than changing the whole nature of the organisation at once.

**Form partnerships with secular organisations:** Existing groups could form links with secular organisations to draw on their expertise, training and co-ordination. This would enable them to acquire the skills necessary for achieving social action objectives. In the process, faith groups and organisations would gain the opportunity to meet and work with people of different faiths and people of no religious faith. Secular organisations open to working with faith groups include LCC which employs Voluntary Service Coordinators to facilitate and support community action within localities.

**Establish a federated project:** Different organisations or faith groups could agree to co-ordinate their efforts on a federated basis. Each organisation or group would work separately on one aspect of a project on the understanding that they are contributing to the achievement of common social action goals. This approach might include assigning tasks to teams of people from different faith groups, for example, to provide a particular service on different days of the week. In this way, a project will function in a multi-faith way even though people of different faiths do not directly work together. This approach has the advantage of sharing the workload without necessitating the development of completely new ways of working. It also enables individual congregations to draw on and utilise their strengths as a community working together.

**Establish an integrated project:** People of different faiths could establish a new project together. This would involve them working together on all aspects of the initiative including: establishing its aims; deciding how to set it up; and developing mechanisms so that all faiths have decision-making authority and can participate in the running of the project.

#### 4.4 SETTING UP A MULTI-FAITH VENTURE

Individuals and organisations thinking about becoming involved in multi-faith initiatives should consider the information provided in this report about the following matters: different faiths groups in Leeds; diversity within faith groups; the ethnic background of those associated with particular faith groups or congregations; and the views of social activists towards social action and multi-faith social action. In addition, people and groups who work in a multi-faith way or in co-operative ventures such as Christian ecumenical initiatives, faith bodies such as the Sikh forum, partnership initiatives with secular organisations and in local projects should be asked about their experiences. Social activists also need to gather information about their more immediate situation in order to identify the organisations, congregations, and individuals working in their area. This information may be found in directories of voluntary organisations and in documents such as Annual Reports.

Decisions about whether multi-faith social action is an appropriate way forward should also take into consideration which organisations, congregations and individuals might be appropriate partners for joint initiatives. Appropriate partners should be groups which have similar concerns, objectives, and approaches to social action. In addition to this, individuals and organisations should look to identify groups which have other aspects in common, such as local concerns or shared ethnicity, because a good match of different factors will help to facilitate close and effective working relationships. The process of identifying partners should also take into account the diversity within faith groups as well as between faith groups. The presumption that people of the same faith group share identical objectives or want to work together cannot be made. For example, it may be that two Muslim groups in the same locality have as little experience of cooperating with one another as they have of co-operating with a Christian group.

A further consideration when choosing appropriate partners is the initial scale of the project. It might be most appropriate to work on a small scale initiative at first, rather than on a larger project which includes all the main faith groups of Leeds. For example, if a Muslim organisation which is fund-raising for Bosnian refugees discovers that a Catholic organisation is also doing so, they might feel it appropriate to combine their efforts or to share their resources and expertise to achieve common objectives.

Once partners have been identified, the process of setting up the project begins. Mechanisms to ensure that different needs are catered for and that power sharing occurs must be developed. These include the following:

- equal opportunities policies so that everyone in the organisation is aware of their rights and responsibilities
- systems of evaluation and accountability so that people from different backgrounds are able to articulate their concerns and ideas

- representation of people of different faiths on the Management Committee so that the concerns of each group can be voiced at a senior level
- policies which ensure the opportunity to practice religious beliefs. For example, flexibility of working hours to ensure that people can celebrate important festivals not covered by Bank Holidays.

Organisations and individuals also need to consider how they will encourage long-term involvement in multi-faith initiatives. When congregations work on social action initiatives, they draw on the common concerns and the mutual commitment of people who meet on a regular basis for worship and social activities. Such long-standing relationships and a sense of belonging help to sustain social action projects. Potentially, a multi-faith project does not have these resources and this may have implications for its long-term survival. This suggests that establishing and running multi-faith social action initiatives requires more than common objectives. A sense of belonging and supportive relationships need to be created within organisations. This could be achieved by organising social networks, perhaps based around sporting or cultural events, or by celebrating the festivals which are important to their membership. Alternatively, projects could regularly evaluate their work through a sharing and learning process. This would provide participants with opportunities to witness the project's achievements and to celebrate them together. The success of multi-faith initiatives in the long-term, therefore, depends on establishing a working framework in which people can build relationships with one another and can work together to achieve common aims in the city of Leeds.

#### WAYS FORWARD

Multi-faith co-operation may develop intentionally or coincidentally in Leeds in the future. This might occur in a number of different ways, for example, by individuals and organisations joining existing multi-faith groups, extending existing projects to include people of different faiths, linking with secular organisations to draw on their expertise, setting up federated projects, or establishing integrated projects. To ensure the success of these initiatives, social activists need to research and identify which faith groups, congregations, and social action projects exist in Leeds and identify potential partners. Structures also need to be established to facilitate co-operative working relationships in the short- and long-term. The adoption of these methods can be tailored to the needs of individual organisations and congregations to ensure that joint social action initiatives and co-operative relationships are developed in the city of Leeds in the future.

## APPENDIX

### THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE REPORT

The involvement of people of faith in social action in Leeds and the potential for future multi-faith cooperation on joint initiatives, was investigated in three ways: a postal questionnaire survey, a series of interviews, and participant observation. These are outlined below.

#### **The Questionnaire Survey**

To find out the extent of congregational involvement in social action in Leeds and the potential for co-operation between congregations on joint social action initiatives in the future, a postal questionnaire survey was sent to faith leaders and representatives (374 in total) at places of worship and worship groups (295 in total). 173 questionnaires were returned completed. The results of the survey are, therefore, based on a response rate of 58 per cent for places of worship and worship groups, and 46 per cent for faith leaders and representatives in Leeds.

This response rate can be broken down according to faith. The largest faith group in Leeds is Christian: 343 of the 374 faith leaders and representatives in the city are Christian (that is, 92 per cent) and 264 of the 295 places of worship in the city are Christian (that is, 89 per cent). This numerical dominance was reflected in the questionnaire's response rate. Christians accounted for 95 per cent of respondents, while Buddhists accounted for two per cent, and Muslims, Sikhs, Jews and Brahma Kumaris respectively accounted for one per cent. This is shown in the table below.

**Table 5.01 Faith of Respondents**

<b>Faith of Respondents</b>	<b>n =173</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Brahma Kumari	1	1
Buddhist	3	2
Christian	165	95
Jewish	1	1
Muslim	1	1
Sikh	2	1

Christian responses can be further broken down to reveal the involvement of different denominations. The largest Christian response was from Anglican congregations which accounted for 41 per cent of Christian respondents and 39 per cent of all respondents. The second largest group was Methodist which accounted for 16 per cent of Christian respondents and 15 per cent of all respondents. A further 12 per cent of Christian respondents and 11 per cent of all respondents were Roman Catholic. Smaller groups responding to the questionnaire included Baptist (9 per cent of Christian respondents and all respondents) and the United

Reformed Church (4 per cent of Christian responses and all respondents). Other Christian denominations accounted for 18 per cent of Christian respondents and 17 per cent of all respondents. This is shown below.

**Table 5.02 The Denomination of Christian Respondents**

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>n= 165</b>	<b>Percentage of Christians</b>	<b>Percentage of all respondents</b>
Anglican	68	41	39
Baptist	15	9	9
Chinese	1	0.6	0.5
Church of the Nazarene	1	0.6	0.5
Ecumenical	3	2	2
German Evangelical	1	0.6	0.5
Hospital patients	2	1	1
Methodist	26	16	15
Independent	7	4	4
Roman Catholic	19	12	11
Quaker	2	1	1
Salvation Army	4	2.4	2
United Reformed	7	4	4
University students	6	4	3
WYACCC*	3	2	2

\*West Yorkshire African Caribbean Council of Churches

### **Interviews**

As stated above, the questionnaire survey gathered information about congregations from faith leaders and representatives. However, congregational social action is only one channel through which people of faith organise in the city. To supplement this information, interviews with social activists were also conducted. Interviewees were asked about the social action projects in which they participate, as well as their personal motivations and goals. They were also asked about whether they felt co-operation with other faith and ethnic groups (multi-faith social action) would be feasible in the work that they do, and whether multi-faith social action initiatives should be generally encouraged in Leeds.

The interviewees included people involved in different types of social action initiatives (social care and service provision, fund-raising, building social relationships, regeneration projects and campaigning work), and those working through a variety of organisations operating in the city (including Leeds City Council and the voluntary sector). They also included:

- people of different faiths and different denominations or sects within faith groups
- people of different ethnic, national, class and caste backgrounds
- women and men
- people living in different areas of Leeds
- people who are paid for their work and those who work voluntarily as unpaid workers

The diversity of interviewees meant that the interview sample contained a much higher proportion of non-Christian people than the questionnaire survey. This is shown in the table below:

**Table 5.03: Faith of Interviewees**

<b>Faith of Interviewees</b>	<b>n = 45</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Buddhist</b>	2	4
Christian	21	47
<b>Hindu</b>	3	7
Jewish	5	11
Muslim	5	11
Secular	4	9
Sikh	5	11

### **Participant Observation**

The results of the questionnaire survey and interviewee responses were supplemented by information gathered when attending and observing a range of social action initiatives in the city. For example, Annual General Meetings, conferences, and individual social action projects, such as a luncheon club for elderly people **and a drop-in centre, were visited. These visits provided insights into the everyday challenges which such organisations face and facilitated informal discussions with a wider range of** social activists than those who were individually interviewed.