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National Association of
Standing Advisory Councils
on Religious Education

SACRE BRIEFING

Issue: 36

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Welcome from the NASACRE Executive

Welcome to another new academic year with all of its challenges and opportunities. The Autumn may be almost upon us and the torrid heat of summer may be receding in our minds, but there will be a lot of hot topics that your SACRE will need to tackle now and in the months ahead. NASACRE aims to keep you up to date with national issues and to provide a range of

You may have new SACRE members at the start of term and we hope that by offering training for new members twice a year, we can help them to understand the work of SACREs and participate confidently as soon as possible. In turn this helps to strengthen your team. We offer a number of training and support webinars during the year, and you can see a brief summary of our current programme [here](#). Hopefully there is something for everyone!

Deborah Weston attended a **Parliamentary Education Committee** along with representatives from other subjects to discuss teacher shortages, as well as how some schools can recruit and retain staff more easily than others. NASACRE will be working with Deborah and others in the RE community to strengthen conversations around this vital topic.

The Political Party Conference season is upon us and it is good to know that members of the RE community will attend these to raise issues important to RE and RE teachers, including the difficult issue of teacher shortages. Read [this item](#) to see what SACREs can do to support this work by holding conversations with your elected members or MPs.

Here is wishing your SACREs and your schools a successful year ahead.

Denise Chaplin, *on behalf of the NASACRE Communication Team*.

Linda is on leave at the moment and sends best wishes to all. Her Chair's foreword will return in the next edition.

Meet the new members of the NASACRE Exec

Several new Exec members were elected at our 2023 Annual Conference and AGM. They introduce themselves on the [website](#).

30 years of NASACRE: SACREs for the Future

NASACRE's Pearl Anniversary Conference, with more than 100 delegates from over 60 SACREs across the country, focused on some of the treasures of the past and looked forward to the golden nuggets of the future. Taking the lead from NASACRE's revised 2023 Constitution, which was approved by conference, Dr Kathryn Wright's keynote set the tone for the day. She challenged SACREs to recognise the things that they do well, and the role the NASACRE has played in strengthening, supporting, representing and celebrating the achievements of SACREs. Her vision for the future of SACREs is that they should continue to develop partnerships with Multi

RE and working to raise awareness of the need for more RE teachers to be recruited.

Recognising that there are challenges ahead formed a major part of the second keynote delivered by the Rt Hon Charles Clarke, Patron of NASACRE. He identified the fractured structure of the current education system as probably one of the greatest challenges, but said that if NASACRE and SACREs get involved in conversations with politicians as the next election approaches, there is an opportunity to influence the future. Charles sees the strength of a SACRE as being able to promote effective social cohesion on a local level and believes that the provision of good RE in schools is a key to achieving that (see notes below).

Another key challenge, and one that was picked up by Dr David Hampshire in his **review of the SACRE annual reports**, is the lack of funding and resources made available to many SACREs. This reflects the fact that many Local Authorities do not yet fully appreciate the value that SACRE can offer their communities.

NASACRE and SACREs need to talk openly about the challenges facing communities regarding social cohesion and emphasise the unique position they hold in being able to bring communities together.

If SACREs can learn from each other (and the review of their 2022 annual reports should help them do that), proclaim their achievements more confidently and hold Local Authorities openly to account, they can begin to influence the situation for the better.

Kathryn Wright reminded conference,

"We have a pearl - RE - and the best pearls are reflective. Challenges and opportunities lie ahead. The world is not the same as it was and SACREs need to think creatively, within the systems that exist. If RE is a treasured pearl, we need keep it on display and admire it."

Papers from the AGM can be found on our website.

Encouragement from our Patron

There are some key points from the speech given by our Patron, **Rt Hon Charles Clarke** that SACREs should consider discussing at their next meeting.

Charles Clarke identified that political issues over the past decade have made it difficult for the government to focus on implementing any changes in the educational arena. There has been little opportunity to redefine RE, despite the numerous reports published. The fractured nature of the education system with the academisation and free school programmes has further impeded progress. He anticipates that as the political situation calms down, SACREs and NASACRE have the opportunity to ensure that they are leading the conversation.

SACREs have many **strengths** to offer in this debate. Unlike any other Local Authority organisation, SACRE intentionally brings together people from different

knows the local area. This knowledge and position gives SACRE a certain moral high ground. SACREs are also concerned with the lives of young people, and this is where long-term change needs to begin.

SACREs do also have their **weaknesses**. The government has not held Local Authorities to account for failing to fund SACREs according to the principles set down. Many SACREs are thus underfunded and marginalised, and so the picture is variable nationwide.

Below are some suggestions from Charles Clarke as **to how SACREs can maximise their strengths**:

- **Talk about the issues raised, highlighting the contribution of RE towards the promotion of community cohesion.**
- **Openly address the polarisation of society, again demonstrating the value of RE.**
- **Identify those who can help build local and national community cohesion.**
- **Ensure that LA members, particularly elected members, play a full part in SACREs.**

SACREs need to argue for their rightful role!

There is a wider role for NASACRE in this debate:

- **NASACRE could make a 'manifesto for SACREs' setting out the strengths of SACREs.**
- **NASACRE needs to define its role, such as contributing to inter faith dialogue, using best practice info, such as from Westhill Award winners.**
- **Say that SACRE is central to the development of community cohesion across the country and set out the ways that could be done more successfully.**
- **Mention the values we want to see in society.**

Questions to discuss at your SACRE meeting:

How can we influence this debate in a way that is central and positive?

In which areas listed above is your SACRE doing well?

Can your SACRE suggest how NASACRE should best engage in this debate?

NASACRE Westhill Awards Winners 2023

At Conference, Westhill Awards were awarded to Doncaster and Bexley SACREs.

range of worldviews. The project will be pupil-led, and activity days will be delivered in such a way as to ensure that they can be replicated in other venues. The resulting resources will be shared across all Doncaster schools after the event.

The project in **Bexley** is going to focus on storytellers, giving pupils an opportunity to hear stories told by faith representatives and at the same time providing teachers with the chance to see good storytelling in practice. There are plans to make a strong link with the Local Agreed Syllabus. Booklets featuring the stories will also be shared across the borough.

If you have ideas for a project and would like to bid for funding, see the information **below** about how to apply for the next round.

Online 2023-24 Training Programme

We are delighted to announce that NASACRE is running another year of **webinars** to support SACREs in their practice. For £50 annually, subscribed SACREs can purchase unlimited access for all their members to each and every webinar, representing incredible value for professional development. SACREs may also book for individual sessions. There are separate rates for delegates from unsubscribed SACREs.

Monday 16th October 2023, 7 - 8:30pm:

Applying for and gaining a Westhill/NASACRE award

led by Linda Rudge & Anne Andrews

This *free session* will help SACREs consider the practicalities of applying for and gaining an award. Attendees will hear from previously successful SACREs sharing what the award has enabled their SACRE to do.

November 2023 – Regional meetings - for SACRE Chairs/Vice chairs, LA officers and professional RE support officers

Dates for each region can be found via the links below, along with details of how to book:

North West NASACRE regional meeting

North East NASACRE regional meeting

East Anglia NASACRE regional meeting

London NASACRE regional meeting

South West NASACRE regional meeting

South East NASACRE regional meeting

East Midlands NASACRE regional meeting

Yorkshire & Humber NASACRE regional meeting

Free session for all SACREs led by the local RE Hub lead and a NASACRE Exec member.

sharing good practice, disseminating national and local news and providing time for SACRE leadership teams to raise and discuss issues, thus supporting each other.

***Tuesday 5th December 2023, 7 - 8pm:**

How may SACREs effectively monitor schools?

led by David Levien, Catherine Hughes and Claire Clinton

This session is a chance for SACREs to come together and hear about and consider a range of strategies and practices that build relationships with schools and enable SACREs to monitor RE and Collective Worship.

***Thursday 18th January 2024, 6:30 - 8pm:**

Using data effectively as a SACRE

Special guest: Deborah Weston

A session for SACRE Chairs/Vice chairs and professional support officers to help them to make effective use of the data that NATRE, NASACRE and the DfE provides, ensuring local data can be drawn upon.

***Thursday 22nd February 2024, 4 - 5:30pm:**

Being an effective SACRE Clerk, part 2

led by David Levien, Catherine Hughes and Claire Clinton

This session will help SACRE Clerks to reflect on their present practice and share with other clerks around the country some top tips for fulfilling their role; it will focus on minute-taking, SACRE's constitution/terms of reference and composition.

***Monday 26th February 2024, 7 - 8pm:**

Dealing with beliefs and practices about loss & death in your Agreed Syllabus

Led by Denise Chaplin and Paul Smalley with guests from the National Association of Funeral Directors.

This webinar will help SACREs to reflect on what they do currently to cover this aspect of the curriculum in schools. It will provide input from the national body of funeral directors, as well as examples from 2 different SACREs of their support work around these issues within their Agreed Syllabus.

***Tuesday 12th March 2024, 7-8pm:**

Convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference – legalities and processes

Led by Paul Smalley with Linda Rudge

This session will focus on the legal process and consider best practice suggestions for convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) for your SACRE.

Wednesday 26th June 2024, 6:30-8pm:

So, you've joined your local SACRE...

Hosted by Exec members

their role, how SACRE works, its statutory responsibilities and how members make their contribution to SACRE's work.

**Prices for those sessions marked **

- Free to SACREs who have bought an annual webinar package
- £20 for a full member SACRE
- £30 for an affiliated SACRE

To book on to any of these sessions, please email admin@nasacre.org.uk providing delegate name, email address and SACRE.

Westhill Awards 2024-25

NASACRE is once again joining with Westhill to offer awards of up to £4000 for innovative and enduring projects. Any project should offer young people meaningful opportunities to engage in compelling learning experiences in RE (or Collective Worship), within the broad theme of "education into diversity".

Any SACRE wishing to submit an application is strongly advised to review the briefing notes which accompany the application form. There is a webinar on **16th October** which will look at the application process and give interested SACREs an opportunity to hear from past winners. This is included in the NASACRE training package.

The application form and the notes can be found and downloaded [here](#).

Party Conference Season - a message from NATRE

In late September and Early October, teams of teachers from NATRE will be joining representatives from Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC), Culham St Gabriel's and RE Today to attend the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat party conferences.

The lobbying work that the RE community does on your behalf is really important because it takes the voices of teachers and pupils to policy makers. At the party conferences we will be sharing the importance of high quality RE for all pupils in all schools, talking about the need for a national standard in the subject, sharing constituency data related to RE with MPs, SACRE members, local councillors and party members and talking about what high quality RE looks like in primary and secondary classrooms.

team to talk about high quality RE for all pupils in all schools. In previous years, we have had amazing discussions because real teachers in real schools and RE community members have said that it was important to them that their MP spoke to us.

You can contact your MP through their website and via email. Some MPs also use Twitter/X, Facebook or Instagram DM.

Please contact them by the most appropriate means explaining why you, their constituent or a teacher in their constituency would like them to meet with us. Ask them to contact us directly by using the following email CEO@natre.org.uk or contacting Fiona Moss (NATRE CEO) @fionajmoss on Twitter/X, where her DMs are open.

The final way that you can support us is by using social media during the party conference to quote tweets and like or share our posts so that the importance of the campaign is shared with a larger audience.

The teachers we are sending to the three party conferences are both primary and secondary classroom practitioners and we at NATRE would like to thank them and their schools for their time. We would like to thank the other representatives from the RE community who will be giving up their time to speak out for our subject.

Thank you to each of you for contacting your MPs and being part of this important work.

RE Hubs - the new 'One-Stop Shop for RE'

Claire Clinton, Lead Director of RE Hubs, is delighted to announce the new website is live: www.re-hubs.uk

It is a freely available one-stop shop that seeks to help teachers and the Religious Education / Religion, Values & Ethics / Religion & Worldviews (RE/RVE/R&W) community locate resources, CPD, inspiration, visits, visitors and events.

The website is being kept up to date by the RE Hubs team, which comprises RE teachers and experts from across England and Wales, specialising in their local area. The newly developed website has, for the first time, a calendar for England & Wales for all stakeholders to advertise events.

Schools will be able to locate and contact speakers and places of interest for visits in the local area; these are trained by the RE Hubs team, and have the RE Hubs kite-mark. We invite SACREs to share the flyer for the FREE training to support those working with schools, as widely as possible, so the list of speakers and places will grow.

For the first time in one central place, a teacher can find local group meetings taking place in their area and make contact with those who run them. New for 23-24 is FREE CPD for those leading local groups/networks in RE, offered in collaboration with NATRE. See [flyer](#) for more details

Finally, the '[Upskill](#)' tab on the RE Hubs website has direct links to a wealth of free resources and contacts useful to all those in the RE/RVE/R&W eco-system from the latest news and blogs to podcasts.

The specific aims identified by the RE Hubs steering group are:

- To improve communication between teachers, professional development and resource providers, and research communities.
- To improve connections and interactions between different parts of the RE/RVE/R&W eco-system.
- To be an information exchange to increase accessibility for all teachers to local and regional professional development and research.
- To enable teachers to teach with greater confidence through their access to the support, knowledge, training and resources available in their region.
- To create a sustainable long-term model for future provision.

'RE Hubs' seek to build relationships with advisers, dioceses, universities, SACREs, LAs, governors, MATs, teaching school hubs and more. So, if you haven't heard from us as yet, do visit the website and get in touch with your Regional Lead.

The steering committee, with representatives from RE organisations AREIAC, AULRE, NASACRE, NATRE, REC and TRS-UK, are dedicated to this collaborative working approach. This project is facilitated by RE Today and supported by a number of funders, to whom we are grateful for their investment at the start of this key infrastructure programme for all those working in and supporting RE/RVE/R&W.

For further information contact:

Claire Clinton – director@RE-Hubs.co.uk

Humanism and Group A of SACREs

You may be aware of a recent judgement involving the position of Humanists on Group A. In the case of *Bowen v Kent County Council*, Justice Constable clarified that applications for Group A membership from persons who represent holders of non-religious beliefs should be considered in the same way as applications from those who represent holders of religious beliefs.

NASACRE has long been asking the DfE to issue guidance to Local Authorities regarding the position of non-religious worldviews on Group A, and we are pleased that this [guidance](#) was issued in August.

Authorities (not SACREs themselves), and that the membership of Group A should ensure that relevant traditions and beliefs in the local authority's area are appropriately reflected. This representation may include non-religious belief systems where they are analogous to a religious belief.

SACREs may wish to advise their Local Authorities that they should review SACRE's Constitution, following publication of the 2021 Census data and in the light of this guidance.

The Inter Faith Network (IFN)

NASACRE is a member of the IFN and this report gives you information about their national meeting and AGM held on July 13th 2023 via Zoom. You can find out more about the IFN from their website: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk>

The topic under discussion was that of religious literacy, with a wide range of experts sharing their wisdom, sending delegates away with much thinking to do.

One of the key ideas to emerge is that the definition of religious literacy is still contested, but at the same time considered an essential component of society.

There are some implications for SACREs as they consider the disciplinary lenses of RE, the reliability of resources, particularly those accessed through the media and the role of inter faith dialogue in the classroom.

A report on the day, and videos of plenary presentations, will both be made available on the [interfaith.org.uk](https://www.interfaith.org.uk) website in due course.

Inter Faith Week 2023 was launched at the meeting by Minister David Bruton, Spiritualists' National Union and IFN Trustee on behalf of the IFN's Board of Trustees. It is the IFN's largest project.

Inter Faith Week this year runs from 12-19 November. The Week is a tremendous opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of religion and belief literacy and to bring people of different faiths and beliefs together in creative and positive ways. The number of schools which took part in 2022 increased by a remarkable 47% on the previous year, indicating how useful they find it to add value to year-round RE learning. SACREs and their members also engaged in many areas and play an important part in the Week. In the run up to this year's Week, you may be interested to:

- Check out the ideas for schools activities for Inter Faith Week [here](#) and perhaps explore a joint activity with one or more of your local schools
- Encourage your local radio station(s) to pick up Inter Faith Week and to include a feature about how schools are taking part and the importance of good and well-resourced RE and/or write a piece for the local paper about this.
- Plan an activity and register it [here](#), requesting a free registration pack with poster, flyers, stickers and a social media card.

Twitter/X.

Items for your SACRE agenda

- Write and approve your annual report or make progress towards this, taking account of NASACRE's analysis of annual reports.
- Discuss the **points** raised by Charles Clarke.
- Check that your annual subscription to NASACRE has been paid.
- Book places on the **training programme**.
- Check with your LA on the place of Humanist representation on your SACRE in line with the recent **High Court ruling**.
- Check where you are in your agreed syllabus process.
- Are all your agendas and minutes available online e.g., on the LA's website and do you advertise your meetings as public?
- Plan how and when to use the **self-evaluation form**.
- Check that the new 2023-24 membership website password has been shared with your SACRE members.
- Advertise the **RE Hubs free training** to your community.
- Plan your events for **Inter Faith Week**.
- Contact your MP and local councillors to encourage them to engage with the teacher representatives during their **party conference**.



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