

NASACRE Conference 2024

How can SACREs support high-quality RE and Collective Worship?

On 20 May, more than 80 delegates from SACREs around the country gathered at the York Hilton for the annual NASACRE conference. NASACRE's Chair Linda Rudge and the outgoing Patron, the Rt Hon Charles Clarke, spoke of the challenge of how SACREs choose to respond to the political opportunities afforded by an election. Two days later, the announcement of a General Election on 4 July created a fresh urgency!

The conversation between Paul Smalley (Exec Assistant to the Chair) and Kathryn Wright (CEO, CStG) allowed delegates to consider the many recent publications and initiatives that demonstrate the way the RE community is coming together to address many of those challenges. The fact that publications such as the [National Content Standard](#) (NCS) and the [Religion & Worldviews Approach to RE Toolkit](#) have been endorsed by a wide range of organisations, gives hope, despite the challenges that remain.

SACRE members were encouraged to think about how they might tackle the challenges of teacher recruitment, for example. The open letter published in The Telegraph earlier this year may have played a role in ensuring the reinstatement of the RE Bursary, but the withdrawal of the Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses for RE, continues to make things difficult for providers of ITE and trainees alike.

While SACREs remain a good place for people to come together to support RE and Collective Worship, their main problem is often lack of funding, so it is hard to plan ahead. Syllabus reviews are expensive and LA support is often reliant on one or two individuals, whose work is at risk when they move on or retire.

Kathryn Wright outlined some of the work that Culham St Gabriel's is doing around the [Freedom of Religion or Belief \(FoRB\)](#), another current theme that SACREs may be well placed to address.

SACRE members were encouraged to use the hope offered by the sobering [Deep & Meaningful? Ofsted RE report](#) to push for action, engaging Parliamentary candidates to talk about RE and the seriousness of the need to engage with religious and non-religious worldviews. Whenever and whatever changes in the months ahead, SACREs can talk to those in power to keep RE and matters of faith and belief on the agenda. They might be the retention of the bursary, the reintroduction of funding for subject knowledge enhancement, for the Government (of whatever colour) to endorse the NCS, and for RE to be part of a post-election curriculum review.

After some discussion time, where delegates had the chance to consider what actions their SACREs might take and question the speakers about how they might do that, the focus moved from challenges to ways that some organisations seek to address them. AREIAC's [Young Ambassadors for RE](#) Pupil Voice project (funded by CStG), the [Big Ambition](#) of the Children's Commissioner for England, Dame

Rachel de Souza, and Lord Bilimoria's [REady for Work](#) campaign, were highlighted. SACREs were encouraged to keep up to date by subscribing to the [NASACRE Noticeboard](#). The NASACRE website also has shared examples of Collective Worship guidance from a range of SACREs, from which subscriber SACREs may gather ideas about how to support and monitor provision.

The highlight of the afternoon was a whistle-stop tour of *35+ Ideas for activist SACREs* presented by Lat Blaylock. He threw down a challenge... if every member of every SACRE became an 'activist for RE' there could be 3000 people working to make RE better. He raised the issue that often SACREs struggle to engage with academies and some schools, suggesting they offer 3 'carrots' before making a challenge!

Lat shared a range of ideas from engaging schools in the RE Today/NATRE *Spirited Arts* competition, holding local heats and exhibitions, to lobbying politicians - and especially local councillors - to take up the RE baton. Other ideas included cross-phase workshops, such as inter-faith climate panels, and training Secondary students to go into Primary schools and talk about their faith traditions, with artefacts as prompts. He encouraged SACREs to think about partnership working, either with each other, local cathedrals or dioceses, but particularly schools and colleges, and when a new faith representative is needed, considering a teacher for that place. SACREs should support MATs, offer what schools need and seek the funds to make a splash!

Conference finished with a brief business meeting and the winners of this year's NASACRE/Westhill Awards were announced. Look out for exciting projects in Bromley, East Sussex and Hampshire!

If you are reading this as a teacher, consider finding out what your local SACRE is doing. Could they use an enthusiastic 'activist' to get them going, or are they already doing a great job, and you are the one missing out...?