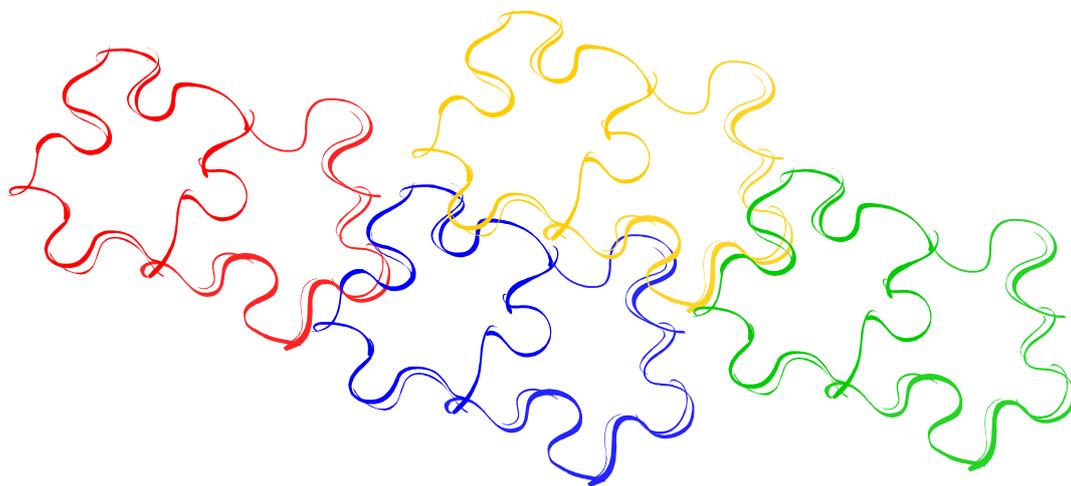


*Valuing Diversity:
Exploring Faith and Culture*



*Resources for working
with young people*

Catherine Duce & Shamila Ahmed

Quotation and copying of the material in this pack is welcomed

provided the source is acknowledged

Further copies are obtainable from the website listed below

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Preface & introduction

This booklet is designed as a tool for people working in statutory and voluntary youth groups, interfaith forums and regional agencies to support them in setting up and running activities with young people on issues of diversity. It stems from a small project entitled “Valuing Diversity, Exploring Faith and Culture” that worked with young people aged 13-25 in North East England. This project was funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and run by the Community and Youth Work Studies Unit, Durham University, in partnership with the North East Regional Youth Work Unit. The project offered 10 diversity workshops hosted by a range of youth organizations in the region and culminated in two cultural diversity events in Newcastle and Durham over the Summer/Autumn of 2007.

This booklet is a response to what the project facilitators found to be a shortage of practical diversity resources available for use by community-based youth groups in North East England. This short booklet is not intended as a comprehensive resource pack. Rather, the aim is to provide an incentive and aid for all workers with young people wishing to tackle the complex issue of diversity in their work using activities drawn directly from tried-and-tested material. Throughout the booklet suggestions are made about how to manage common challenges and reactions by young people to this type of group work. It will be especially helpful for those who lack the confidence or the time to search out suitable resources. We recognize that the majority of youth work is carried out by part-time workers and volunteers, who often work with little supervision and support, and for whom youth work is just one small part of their lives.

If you have any comments or feedback on this resource, or would like to let us know what happened when you used it in your setting, please send comments to:

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What is diversity?

“Diversity” is a word commonly used in everyday language, usually to refer to wide-ranging differences between people or things. In this booklet we are using the term “diversity” in a special sense to refer to the recognition that people are different in important respects. This might be along the dimensions of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs or other ideologies. Work on these issues of diversity involves developing acceptance of and respect for individual and group differences, promoting mutual understanding and dialogue, challenging negative stereotypes, discrimination and oppressive attitudes and behaviours. It is important that the work on “diversity” (recognising and valuing people’s differences) includes or leads into work on tackling unfair discrimination and oppression based on negative views of people’s differences. We see it as moving beyond simple tolerance and exploring these differences in a safe and positive environment.

Are you interested in running a diversity activity?

- ❁ Ensure people are clear about what diversity means to them.
- ❁ Be clear about which aspect of diversity you intend to focus on.
- ❁ Don’t be afraid to challenge stereotypes and misunderstandings early on.
- ❁ Prepare well for spontaneity and learning.
- ❁ Smaller groups often work best, resulting in deeper discussions.
- ❁ Ground rules are recommended to highlight respect and confidentiality. (See Appendix 1 for examples)

Project Learning

Valuing Diversity: Exploring Faith & Culture

The *Valuing Diversity, Exploring Faith & Culture* project focused specifically on issues of religious and cultural diversity in local communities. The principal aim of each diversity workshop was to foster better relations between young people from different cultures and faiths in youth organizations by:

- promoting respect for religious, racial and cultural diversity.
- empowering young people critically to reflect on their own culture and experiences of faith in North East England.
- encouraging youth workers to reflect on their practice and share information about cultural and faith resources.

What would be the aims of your session?

Why diversity is important to youth work



Youth work has a long history of working with young people from a range of faith and cultural backgrounds and promoting informal education around issues of discrimination, racism and intercultural education. Its foundations are rooted in the core principles of democracy, equality and learning through mutual dialogue.

Diversity awareness is important to young people because this age group (roughly 11 to 19 years old) is particularly vulnerable to heightened tensions developing between different cultural and faith groups. Deep-rooted prejudices can be nurtured from an early age and exacerbated by experiences in education and employment. Furthermore, the fast-changing social and ethnic composition of towns and cities in Britain can cause tensions ranging from disturbances on a scale of the 2001 riots in Bradford and Oldham between different ethnic groups, to less well-documented daily bullying occurring between marginalised groups and individuals in the classroom or wider school environment, on the internet and/or in local public spaces.

Project Learning

Valuing Diversity: Exploring Faith & Culture

“Surely diversity isn’t a top priority in the North East?” - *WRONG!*

The North East of England has some of the least multi-cultural places in Britain. This poses both a challenge and major incentive for youth workers operating in the region. The locations where the *Valuing Diversity, Exploring Faith & Culture* workshops took place were relatively diverse. These included, for example, Grangetown, Middlesbrough (one of the most “deprived” 10 wards out of 8414 wards nationally¹); Easington, County Durham (recently scored “least multicultural” in Britain²); the medieval market town of Alnwick in the far north of the region; and Stockton-upon-Tees, a town with a larger concentration of black and minority ethnic residents. Wherever your group operates, there is a pressing need to introduce young people to ways of life beyond their own, through encounters with people from different cultural and faith backgrounds. Indeed, it could be argued that their life skills, future employability and active citizenship depend upon it.

¹ *The Teesvalley Economy, 2000*, Issue 54, viewed at: http://www.teesvalley-jsu.gov.uk/old/reports/tv_economy/sept2000a.pdf

² *The Guardian, 2006*. ‘Analysts name Britain’s most racially diverse areas’, viewed at www.guardian.co.uk/Britain

Dealing with complex discussions

Running diversity activities with young people can be a challenging task. It involves engaging young people in sensitive and potentially provocative discussions and requires a confident worker to facilitate the group dynamics. This section of the booklet is designed to help workers manage some of the most common and difficult topics arising, based on points of learning from the *Valuing Diversity, Exploring Faith & Culture* project.

In the box below we list some of the issues that consistently arose in our workshops and suggest ways of dealing with these issues when they arise. Ignorance, indifference and even not perceiving some abusive viewpoints as a “problem” were the most challenging tasks for the workers to deal with. In addition, the language used by young people often remained firmly entrenched in concepts of “us” and “them”, which could be divisive. For example, one young man upon being asked why diversity work might be important replied: “To see what kind of life *they* have. Also to see what *them* do different to *us*”. As we explored this statement with the young person he began to see that the distinctions were less clear-cut.

Here is a list of possible activities youth organisations might do to tackle these issues:

<i>Intention</i>	<i>Possible activities</i>
Dispelling myths about refugees and asylum seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite in a guest speaker to give a personal testimony. • Compare fact with the fiction – many website resources are available for help with this, e.g. www.refugeecouncil.org.uk.
Promoting discussion to tackle Islamophobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite in a guest speaker to give a personal testimony. • Visit a local mosque.
Breaking down the ignorance, fear and indifference about racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential experiences with mixed groups of young people. • Encouraging conversations between different groups.
Relating “our” world with “theirs” – encouraging global citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinning projects locally, nationally, globally.
Local community tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage joint partnership projects on community initiatives. • Intergenerational work.

Two themes for myth busting discussion

Two topics consistently arose in diversity workshops with young people on which statements were made by young people based on serious misunderstandings. These topics related to asylum seekers and refugees and misunderstandings about Islam. We outline some examples of the statements made by young people, and some responses for workers to help dispel these misunderstandings and myths.

Issue 1: Refugees and asylum seekers



Who are refugees?

The UN convention on the status of refugees (1951), the “Geneva Convention”, defines refugees as people who have fled from their country to a foreign country because of a well-founded fear of persecution.

Who are asylum seekers?

An asylum seeker is someone who has left their own country and wants to move to another country, where they will be protected. In Britain, an asylum seeker is officially categorised a person who has lodged a claim with the government and is *waiting* to find out if they can stay in the country. If they are allowed to stay they become classified as “refugees”.

Who are migrant workers?

Migrant workers from many countries (including European Union countries) make up 7% of the population of Britain, or almost 10% of the working population. Migrant workers raise national economic output by expanding the supply of labour and by filling gaps in the job market.

Issue 2: Islam and Islamophobia³

... Muslims don't integrate very well

... Muslims are terrorists

... Muslims wear turbans

... Muslim women are submissive

What is Islam?

The word "Islam" means both "peace" and "submission". Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over one billion followers. The 2001 census recorded 1,591,000 Muslims in Britain, around 2.7% of the population. There are several different groups of Muslims, but for all of them faith is regarded as a major part of their identity. The following is a short list of key points about Islam:

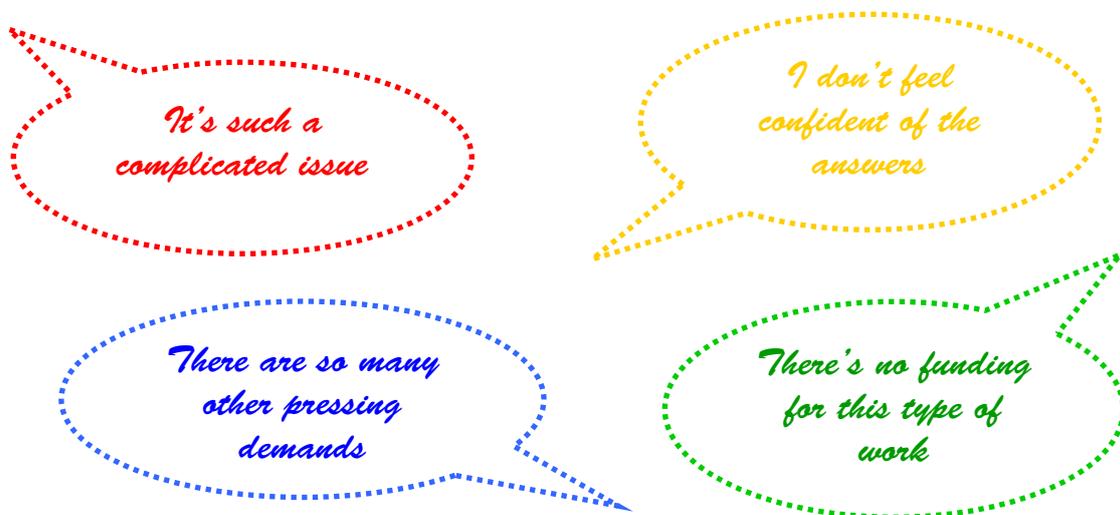
- Islam was revealed over 1400 years ago in Mecca, Arabia.
- Followers of Islam are called Muslims.
- Muslims believe that there is only One God.
- The Arabic work for God is "Allah".
- According to Muslims, God sent a number of prophets to mankind to teach them how to live according to God's law.
- Jesus, Moses and Abraham are respected prophets of God.
- Muslims believe that the final prophet was Muhammad ("peace be upon him").
- Muslims base their laws on their holy book, the Qur'an.
- There are five basic pillars of Islam: the declaration of faith, praying five times a day, giving money to charity, fasting and a once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca.

What is Islamophobia?

Islamophobia is the fear, hatred or hostility directed towards Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia can be expressed in a number of ways, for example, verbal and physical abuse and violence against Muslims, and attacks on mosques.

³ For information and resources tackling prejudice and misunderstanding across all faith traditions, see the following resource book: *A sense of respect: interfaith activities for young people*, by Maxine Green. National Youth Agency, www.nya.org.uk

Issues for youth workers



The experiences of workers running diversity activities with young people are wide-ranging and vary according to personal attitudes of workers, their education and training, the location and ethos of the youth organisation and the types of young people involved. The statements above encapsulate some of the common viewpoints expressed about this type of work. In the *Valuing Diversity, Exploring Faith & Culture* project, some workers expressed feelings of unease about having to lead discussions on cultural, ethnic and religious issues due to a lack of knowledge and resources. They welcomed the external input. In fact, it is sometimes assumed that diversity work should be carried out by “experts” – namely, youth workers from different ethnic backgrounds who are assumed “naturally” to understand the needs of young people from a similar background. This is not necessarily a good approach. Not only does it place the main burden of challenging stereotypes and tackling racism on workers who face discrimination and oppression themselves, it also means that the majority of youth workers do not gain the skills and confidence to do this work. Issues of diversity and racism need to be worked on and tackled by all youth workers.

Professional planning and preparation is the key to developing positive encounters between different groups of young people, however informal. This has been termed “planning for spontaneity”, which is central to youth work⁴. Very often diversity work can be regarded as an additional “added extra”. This booklet encourages whole organisations to develop a culture of prioritising this work from the level of managers and leaders downwards. Only then will a respect and sensitivity towards diversity filter down to the young people themselves.

⁴ Smith, M. (1982) *Creators not Consumers: Rediscovering Social Education*, London: NAYC.

Project Learning
Valuing Diversity: Exploring Faith & Culture

“We need local diversity training which focuses on North East issues”

We asked youth workers involved in the *Valuing Diversity, Exploring Faith & Culture* project to comment on the levels of diversity training each had received and where they identified future training needs. From those who replied, it appeared that some degree of “equality and diversity” training was common in statutory organisations and larger national charities. This was run either by external professionals or in-house members of staff from central offices and covered issues such as legislation, attitudes, policies and procedures, case studies, appropriate language and so on. However, there was little mention of managing cultural and faith sensitive issues. Some youth groups were run by volunteers who had no training at all, but recognized personal experience and encounters as equipping them with the tools for this work. Other youth workers had done diversity training incorporated as part of a short course or professional qualifying education for youth work. Overwhelmingly, however, participants called for more local diversity training which incorporated issues specific to the North East. These needed to address issues in fast-growing migrant populations in unexpected areas of the region. Workers commented that their lack of knowledge and contact with these new communities made it hard for them to educate and explore young people’s questions and issues relating to broader community concerns.

Building on the comments of youth workers and our experience of running the diversity workshops in North East England, we made some recommendations for further work on this theme as follows:

- ✿ The development of *more regional training opportunities for workers with young people in the area of diversity and community cohesion* – both paid and non-paid workers.
- ✿ Greater emphasis within this work on *encounters and interactions between different groups*. Listening to personal stories or participating in joint activities helps to challenge societal “labels”. Suggested ways of developing this work include building links with local faith communities to arrange visits or inviting in speakers from refugee/asylum seeker organizations, disability groups and other marginalized groups. Other suggestions include setting up rural to urban exchanges between youth organisations in the region.
- ✿ The development of a *database of youth work diversity resources* – this would support all workers with young people who feel ill-equipped to develop work in this area.

Some diversity activities for youth organisations

This section of the booklet outlines several resources for work on diversity, with step-by-step instructions for workers with young people to use as appropriate in their local setting. The activities described are all suitable for starting out a process of exploring issues of diversity. Once this process has begun, then it can be followed up with more challenging and in-depth work on developing young people's commitment, skills and confidence to tackle discriminatory and oppressive attitudes and behaviours themselves. The activities are designed for use in youth organizations, but written in a format easily transferable to wider community groups. Each activity has an objective, a list of required materials and estimated time duration. Use these only as a guide. Each activity has scope to be shortened or lengthened as appropriate and the youth worker can tailor each session to best meet the needs of each group. Where activities have been adapted from alternative sources, these are referenced in the footnotes. We recommend these resources for further ideas.

1. The agreement line activity

Objective : to encourage young people to engage with each others' views on provocative issues. Can be used as an "ice breaker" to start a session.

Materials : large space, two signs "Agree" and "Disagree" (see Appendix 3).

Time : 10 minutes.

1. The statements below can be debated as "agreement lines". An imaginary line is drawn across the room from "Agree" on one side to "Disagree" on the other. Young people stand along the line to illustrate their viewpoint on issues.

Example statements :

Jokes about the Irish are racist.

Talking about the "Paki" cornershop and the "Chinky" take-away is offensive.

Religious people are more likely to be good people.

Banning a girl wearing a headscarf to school is acceptable.

Relationships between people from different religions are getting worse.

2. These statements get people moving and generate a lot of debate and discussion. They involve the whole group and can provide a marker for changes in viewpoints by the end of a session. It can be a good idea to start with some more informal statements first. Then progress to more controversial issues.

2. The identity game

Objective : to explore lifestyles and opportunities of different people in society and highlight discrimination.

Materials : chairs in a circle, bowl of sweets or fruit, different “identities” written on pieces of card (see Appendix 2).

Time : 20 minutes.

1. Ask everyone to sit in a circle. The identity game gets everyone thinking about what life might be like in the shoes of another person. Everyone is handed one “identity” on a piece of card. For example, “young Asian man”, “woman in a wheelchair”, “middle-class white man”, “young gay black man” (see Appendix 2 for a full list). They are then asked to think about, and comment individually on, some of the challenges and/or issues which someone with their “identity” might face in everyday life.
2. Questions are read out by the group leader. Those who can answer “yes” are invited to collect a sweet from the bowl in the middle of the circle. Sweets can be regarded as representing power and opportunity and the final distribution of sweets around the group can be used to initiate discussion on societal discrimination. Possible questions:

Could you get to the third floor of a building if there was no lift?

Could you play in the World Cup football final?

Might you be asked to model clothes in a fashion magazine?

Would you travel on public transport late at night?

Would you kiss your partner in public without fear?

Are you likely to be the manager of a successful business in London?

3. As an alternative to using sweets or fruit, participants can stand in a line and take a step forward each time they answer “yes”. Discussion can then focus on whether and why those who have moved further have more choices and opportunities in life. Discussion points can also be raised about how people have multiple identities; how people can be stereotyped by others into one identity; and how participants would identify themselves.

*3. The "food we eat" activity*⁵

Objective : to illustrate the extent to which our lives are influenced by and intertwined with many cultures and countries.

Materials : Pictures of country flags and description of food from that country.

Time : 15 minutes.

1. Get young people into groups of four or five and ask them to list what food they ate for their evening meal the night before, followed by a list of where they think this food might have come from.
2. Distribute to each group five pictures of foods and five country flags. Ask them to match up the appropriate flag with the most likely country of origin of the food, for example: tea from China, sausage from Germany, chocolate from Mexico (see footnote 5 for where to obtain flags). This is designed to trigger wider discussions about the extent to which our lives are intertwined with other countries and cultural influences. Items of clothing and other accessories can also demonstrate this. Many of the food items pictured may be made in this country, inspired by recipes and traditions from other parts of the world. Some may be imported, or based on imported ingredients.
3. This activity may lead into a discussion about the exploitation of people in some of the world's poorest countries, who provide cheap food to richer nations; the air miles travelled by certain foods; the impact on the world's climate and the importance of buying fair trade food.

4. Language

Objective : to explore how language perpetuates stereotypes.

Materials : paper, pens.

Time : 15 minutes.

1. Explore the concept of ethnic humour with young people. Ask them to describe what ethnic humor is and what all ethnic jokes have in common. Explain that ethnic jokes usually stereotype a particular national, cultural or religious group, for example, Irish, Polish, Jewish or Pakistani people.
2. Ask young people to work in pairs and make a list of all the groups about whom jokes are made, what the stereotype of the group is, where they hear the stereotype perpetuated and if it is true or false.
3. Have a discussion with young people about the impact of these stereotypes and whether it is ever acceptable to tell jokes that perpetuate stereotypes.

⁵ This activity is adapted from an activity in the *Show Racism the RED Card* educational pack (linked to DVD). Available from: Show Racism the RED Card, PO Box 141, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, NE26 3YH Email: info@TheRedCard.org Website: www.TheRedCard.org

*5. Identification game*⁶

Objective : to develop sensitivity of language in describing different people.

Materials : none.

Time : 15 minutes.

1. A useful warm-up exercise. One person in the group stands with their back to the group and another person describes someone in the group. They must be careful to describe each person in a positive way - not in a fashion that could be seen as derogatory. Time is given during which the person with their back to the group has to guess who is being described.
2. The person out front has then to choose another person to come out front and the former then chooses someone else to describe.
3. The facilitator reminds those describing people that positive language should be used. Names of well-known "celebrities" could also be used in this activity.

⁶ This activity is taken from the book: Brandes, D. & Philips, H. (1979) *Gamesters' Handbook: 140 Games for Teachers and Group Leaders*, Stanley Thornes, UK, p. 130.

Some DVDs available for diversity work

There are some excellent DVDs available offering an additional tool to use with young people on diversity issues.

Below are just a few examples:

Where's the faith in youth? (20 minutes)

Limited availability from: The Churches Regional Commission in the North East, Ushaw College, Durham, DH7 9RH. Tel: 0191 373 5453

This DVD and educational activity guide were produced as part of a two-year research project exploring the role of faith communities in promoting the social inclusion of young people in North East England. It shows a range of faith communities and other faith-linked projects, raising awareness of the potential contributions, issues and challenges of this work. It is a useful regional resource for young people, youth workers, statutory agencies and faith communities.

Unveiling the Voice of Muslim Youth (6 short films @ 3minutes each)

Limited availability from: Shamila Ahmed, Project Manager, Making Sense of Media Project, Teesside, July-Nov 07. Email: shamila.ahmed@durham.ac.uk

There are six short films on this DVD made by young Muslims on Teesside aged 13-19 years old. They explore issues of identity, faith, media and citizenship. It can be used in youth groups, schools and local authorities to tackle Islamophobia and increase cultural understanding.

Show Racism the Red Card (15 minutes)

Available from: Show Racism the RED Card, PO Box 141, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, NE26 3YH
Email: info@TheRedCard.org. Website: www.TheRedCard.org

This is an anti-racist educational DVD which conveys a powerful message through the medium of professional football. It is suitable for a broad range of age groups and comes with an education pack, full of ideas for follow up activities and discussions. The video is suitable for both primary and secondary schools and can be used by a wide range of other organisations to promote anti-racism.

Faith & Peace in our Communities (14 minutes)

Available from: The East West Trust, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG Website: www.eastandwest.co.uk. Email: eastwesttrust@aol.com

This DVD is an educational tool to stimulate dialogue, reflection and action on making communities stronger, more cohesive and more peaceful. It is produced by the Building Bridges project of the East West Trust and comprises young people's perspectives.

Further ideas for cross-cultural work with young people



Running joint cultural events

Cultural events, such as those run as part of the *Valuing Diversity, Exploring Faith & Culture* project, provide important environments that are safe and open whereby meaningful direct encounters can take place and stereotypes and prejudices can begin to be broken down. Some people express concern that cross-cultural work with young people can be quite tokenistic, often taking the form of a one-off event or session. These concerns are justified, but should not be used as an excuse for doing nothing at all.

Twinning between youth organisations

Especially in rural or ethnically homogeneous areas, an effective way to develop dialogue and understanding between different groups of young people is to set up twinning arrangements between youth centres or organisations. This can be mediated through cultural forms such as art, sport, music and outdoor activities.

Intergenerational work

Given that many tensions centering on young people in communities are a result of anti-social behaviour, there is a need to develop planned and meaningful direct contact not only between different communities but also within communities through intergenerational work.

Deliberate policy of ethnically mixed staff teams

Exposing young people to different role models can be achieved by introducing a deliberate policy of creating ethnically mixed staff teams.

Residential experiences

There is no better example of encouraging young people to mix and converse together than by organizing a residential for a small group of young people from mixed backgrounds. If well planned, these experiences of sharing and living together can have a highly influential impact on the perceptions and outlook of the participants.

The logo for 'Resources & Websites' features the text in a black, cursive font. Behind the text is a colorful, abstract graphic composed of interlocking, wavy lines in red, yellow, blue, and green, resembling a molecular structure or a network of connections.

Resources & Websites

Some practical resources to help you:

Connect: different faiths shared values

A booklet for young people, produced in association with TimeBank and The National Youth Agency.

Available to download from: www.interfaith.org.uk

A sense of respect: interfaith activities for young people

This resource pack arose from work carried out by the The National Youth Agency's Partners in Innovation programme. It is a tool for youth workers, and others working with young people, to help increase their interfaith dialogue, respect and understanding.

Available to download from: www.nya.org.uk

Show Racism the RED card: Education Pack and DVD

Show Racism the Red Card is an anti-racist charity, established in January 1996 with the aim of using professional footballers as anti-racist role models. They have produced an anti-racist educational resource and DVD for youth groups and schools.

For more information: www.TheRedCard.org

Diversity and Dialogue: Resources

These resources are for people who want to build better understanding between young people from different backgrounds. They offer ideas for working with young people in various situations - from rural areas with little diversity, to urban multi-faith schools.

For more information: www.diversityanddialogue.org.uk/resources.html

Kick It Out: Resources and Links

Kick it Out draws on the appeal of football to help educate young people about the effects of racism on both society and individuals. The website has an excellent list of organizations and curriculum ideas for diversity work.

For more information: www.kickitout.org

Some research reports to help you:

Diversity and Dialogue: Building better understanding between young people living in a multi-faith society (2006) by Becky Hatch.

A report from a partnership project led by Save the Children, which analysed over 100 existing youth projects in schools and communities doing cross-cultural work, ran interfaith projects with schools and partners across the UK and undertook a consultation with 124 young people living in multi-faith environments. Contains useful learning, advice and ideas for projects. Available to download from: <http://www.diversityanddialogue.org.uk/index.html>

Walking alongside young people: challenges and opportunities for faith communities (2007) by Shamila Ahmed, Sarah Banks and Catherine Duce.

A final research report on North East England developed in partnership between the Community and Youth Work Studies Unit, Durham University and the Churches Regional Commission for the North East. Available to download from: www.durham.ac.uk/sass/cayw

Some organisations to help you:

The Interfaith Network for the UK

This network promotes good relations between the major faiths in the UK. It links over 100 member organizations.

Website: www.interfaith.org.uk

The National Youth Agency

Supports those involved in young people's personal and social development and works to enable all young people to fulfil their potential within a just society.

Website: www.nya.org.uk

Funderfinder

A database of funding organizations. You can access this at your local council for voluntary service (CVS). Find your local office at the National Association of CVS.

Website: www.nacvs.org.uk



Respect yourself

Respect what each other has to say

Be open and honest about what you think

Only speak if you feel comfortable

Enjoy yourself!



Appendix 2
Identity Game Materials

Middle-class white man

Young gay black man

Traveller living at [name of site]

Woman size 20

Young woman with a head scarf

Refugee from Iraq

Young black man

Man with learning disabilities

Elderly woman

Young male low skilled

Visually-impaired older man

Woman in a wheelchair

AGREE I

DISAGREE I