

## Case Study

# Building Inter-Faith Relations

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### Introduction

- Forum of Faiths



The Forum of Faiths works throughout the year to improve relationships between faith communities and the wider community. The Forum began to meet in 2006 and has promoted discussion about issues that impinge upon the life of the faith communities within wider local society. Topics have included the 'Prevent' agenda, the hate crime laws, faith communities and the local media. The idea of forming a group consisting of leaders, of the different faith communities represented in this borough, clerical and lay, arose out of an Equal Opportunities and Access project.

- Inter-Faith Week

In Inter-Faith week 2011 local representatives from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu faiths organised activities to celebrate Hertsmere's diverse community.

An event called 'Fostering Good Relations', which was open to all staff, partners and voluntary groups to discuss their faiths and how they relate to public sector services and the wider community. There was also an event for religious schools and volunteer projects throughout the week.



- Holocaust Memorial

Each year the Mayor of Hertsmere is joined by councillors, local religious leaders and school children for a service and two minute silence to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

The service includes readings, a short film and music from the Community Choir. It commemorated internationally on 27 January each year. This date was chosen as it is the anniversary of the day in 1945 on which the Soviet Army liberated the largest Nazi concentration camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau.

## Key Achievements

- Inter-Faith Week

Hertsmere Borough Council gave £5000 funding to support the Forum of Faiths becoming a constituted group. The Forum is now fully constituted charitable body. Each year the Council also provide funding to the Forum of Faiths to support activities in Inter- faith week.

Seva and Mitzvah Day also took place at the beginning of the week to 'service the wider community' through volunteering and clear up activities. This was a joint initiative between the Hindu and Jewish community involving over 200 people who wanted to volunteer and do something for the wider community.

Cllr John Donne, Portfolio Holder said "I found the fostering good relations event very interesting – I think everyone who was there did. The aims of the event was to strengthen inter faith relations, encourage a stronger bond and understanding, and work towards new partnerships, which I think we did. The council is keen to work with different faith groups across our area to reflect the communities we serve and it was a very informative event."

Different Faiths schools also came together to do various performances, share cultural differences including food and displays. This event was well attended by 7 different schools and many residents and increased the understanding of different religions and beliefs in the community.

- Holocaust Memorial

This year's theme asked everyone to think about the rights, responsibility and duty we all have to speak up when we see or hear something which we believe to be wrong. The event has been running for 11 years at the Council and schools in Hertsmere and is always well attended.



## Next Steps

Hertsmere Borough Council will ensure that these events can continue to take place to promote positive relationships between people of different faiths as well as those of no-belief.