



*The Interfaith Forum would like to thank all our funders for their support over the year.*

For more information or to become involved with the work of the Interfaith Forum, please contact:-  
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**Website : [www.interfaithforum.co.uk](http://www.interfaithforum.co.uk)**



## An Overview

Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum continues to work as a forum where members from all major faiths can work together to raise awareness promoting better understanding between people of faith or no faith in our local schools, colleges, places of worship and elsewhere. This work we believe continues to be of critical importance to our increasingly multicultural multi faith community.

What we all see in the media about culture clash, mistrust and suspicion amongst people from different backgrounds, I believe is born out of ignorance of the "other" and sows the seeds of fear and hatred. We all know that ignorance only breeds ignorance and it is therefore very important to have a meaningful dialogue and to encourage people to be open about their way of life and to respect other people's way of life.

This year has been difficult as there was no funding available from anywhere to expand our services by staging joint conferences and events for the benefit of the community.

As a current Chair of the Interfaith Forum, I would like to give you a resume of what we have been able to do in these difficult financial conditions over the past 12 months.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the members of Interfaith Forum, particularly Derek Estill who has devoted a lot of his time to set up and organise various talks and events and with the help of Sadiq Patel who again has been a very good administrator ensuring that all events and talks are conducted smoothly and as planned. I would also like to thank Community CVS who have been very kind to allow Sadiq to help us in his voluntary capacity and to continue to support us in so many ways.

The following are the bullet points of our work during the past year.

- Marketed our services at the Blackburn College student enrolment day.
- A panel of six members each from a different faith taking part in questions and answers for the children of both junior and secondary schools in Blackburn & Darwen.
- Participating in the Remembrance Day parade at the Corporation Park Cenotaph.
- Holocaust Memorial Remembrance in Partnership with BwD Borough Council.
- Work has been done building on the previous work done to establish East Blackburn Faith Leaders Forum between local Churches and Mosques.
- Delivered talks in schools and places of worship.
- Annual Remembrance Day for local people, a new project in partnership with BwD Borough Council and the Blackburn Cathedral.

Again, my sincere thanks to all who have supported the work of the Interfaith Forum and hope this continues in the future.



pp Joginder Singh Bhamrah  
Chair of Interfaith Forum.

## Our Internal Structures

The Interfaith Forum holds regular committee meetings to review activities and plan future work. It is supported in doing this by CVS and we are grateful for their support and their skills and knowledge which are very much appreciated. The Interfaith Forum is aware of the need to adopt a strategic overview and make plans for the future of the organisation and as a charity complies with requirements of the Charity Commission. We will as a result of the Development Day study be reviewing the arrangements to best support and appoint people to serve on the Forum's Advisory Committee

### Faith Representation

The Interfaith Forum provides faith representation to other bodies and to the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as required

### Interfaith Forum's 2016/17 Programme Topics

- 1) Continue to participate in civic occasions as needed and to speak out on local and national issues related to Interfaith work such as Hate Crime etc
- 2) Continue to work with all schools and colleges in the Borough
- 3) Support and arrange occasions that enable discussion and dialogue on Faith and other related matters
- 4) Continue to arrange visits to different places of worship in aid of breaking down barriers and building trust and understanding
- 5) Work in cooperation with Blackburn College to help establish a Youth Interfaith Forum allied to the BwD Interfaith Forum
- 6) Support and enable the East and North Blackburn Faith Leaders Forums to flourish and to facilitate the formation of other local Forums in other parts of the Borough.



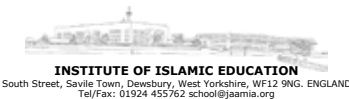


Memorable Occasions During the year that have made a difference

Visit to the Institute of Islamic Education in Dewsbury West Yorkshire –

The Institute, mindful of the need to ensure their students who are immersed in Islamic studies also have an opportunity to learn and understand things about other faiths, invited the BwD Interfaith Forum to spends a day with them to see their work and to meet and speak to their students. This was particularly memorable because Sadiq Patel, an important and influential member of our Interfaith Forum, was a former student at the Institute. This was

a very interesting, informative and useful visit which the Institute valued as can be seen from their letter below



Sadiq Patel  
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16<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Dearest Sadiq and the BwD Interfaith Forum,

On behalf of the governors, teachers and students of the Institute of Islamic Education we wish to thank the BwD Interfaith Forum, for taking the time to visit our school and to share the experience and values of interfaith dialogues through education first-hand.

Our entire school was delighted to have you join us for the day! We hope that you enjoyed your time with us and that your experience empowered you as much as it empowered our students.

We want to ensure that our students are enlightened on this subject through the support of professional individuals by offering them opportunities to engage and discuss the diverse multi faith our country has to offer.

We are especially indebted to our dear friend and colleague Sadiq who helped to arrange this program by gathering a fantastic group of highly experienced and knowledgeable personals. A collective group of individuals from six major faith coming together to our Institute was a historic moment which will be savored for a long time. We hope events of this nature can assist in creating educated citizens who go on to become role models within our communities.

Thank you again for sharing your valuable time with us.

Sincerely,  
Nasir Khan - Head of RE

Meeting with the Bishop of Blackburn –

We were delighted that Bishop Julian agreed to come a meet us to discuss our work in the borough. This gave us a good opportunity to explain the breadth and depth of our work amongst the local community and to share our aims and objective with him. He too was able to explain his views on the importance of dialogue across the different Faiths in Blackburn with Darwen and wider afield. We were pleased to hear he supported our work and is convinced it is of real importance to us all.



**Faith Food and Friendship** – Building on previous work that created the East and North Blackburn Faith Leaders Forums in Blackburn the Interfaith Forum, in conjunction with these more local Forums formed between Churches and Masjids that are close to each other, have held very successful Faith Food and Friendship events.

These involved all taking part bringing food to share with each other and whilst eating talking to each other to get to know a little about each other thus

breaking down misperceptions and to begin to make friendships.



Aims of Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum

- 1) **Harmony, Trust and Shared Respect:**  
To work together to foster understanding and cooperation between the Faith communities in Blackburn with Darwen.
- 2) **Engagement, Participation and Commitment:**  
To increase understanding of the positive role that the Faith communities can play in society.
- 3) **Community Cohesion:**  
To improve the quality of life of local people by working together on agreed projects in order to demonstrate our commitment to working in partnership between people of different Faiths

Charity Trustees and Advisory Committee Members 2016/17

| Officers  | Members                            |              |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Chair     | * Joginder Singh Bhamrah           | Sikhism      |
| Treasurer | Sadiq Patel                        | Islam        |
| Secretary | * Derek Estill                     | Christianity |
|           | Abdul Kheratker                    | Islam        |
|           | Moulana Zakaraya Anwar             | Islam        |
|           | * Salim Mulla                      | Islam        |
|           | The V. Rev'd Christopher Armstrong | Christianity |
|           | The Rev'd John Howard-Norman       | Christianity |
|           | Canon Dr. Arun John                | Christianity |
|           | * Renee Black                      | Judaism      |
|           | Amrit Kaur Bamrah                  | Sikhism      |
|           | Baldeep Hungin                     | Sikhism      |
|           | Bharat Parmer                      | Hinduism     |
|           | * Ashok Chudasama                  | Hinduism     |
|           | * Madhubala Pandya                 | Hinduism     |
|           | Richard Foster                     | Buddhism     |
|           | Aftab Mughal                       | Web Master   |
|           |                                    |              |
|           |                                    |              |

\* = Trustee Members

Alternates attend when Members cannot



## Interfaith Forum Support Officer – Sadiq Patel

Sadiq Patel has, since February 2006, been supporting and facilitating the work of the Interfaith Forum (IFF).

He would like to take this opportunity to express his grateful thanks for the support he has received from both IFF members and his CVS colleagues in carrying out his work.

Please contact Sadiq if you want to learn more about the work of the Interfaith Forum. (Please refer to back page)

## Our Years Work

### Remembrance Sunday

A key element of the Interfaith Forum's work relates to our civic duty as faith communities to remember those who have fought and died in wars and conflicts. As part of this, the IFF has participated in Remembrance Sunday commemorations.



### Holocaust Memorial Day

The Interfaith Forum has also played a vital part in remembering the suffering of communities on the grounds of religion. As part of this, Holocaust Memorial Day, remembering the atrocities committed against the Jews and others, is a key date in the IFF calendar.

Both these events are in partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

## Visits to Places of Worship

These have continued to be arranged so that pupils from local schools are able to visit a Church, Sikh Gurdwara, Buddhist Centre, Jewish Synagogue, Hindu Temple and Mosque. Reports from schools that have been on these visits illustrate that they have also valued these trips very much.

## Memorial Day

The Interfaith Forum has worked with others, to establish a Memorial Day for Blackburn with Darwen when all those who have died during the previous year can be remembered. The Interfaith Forum also continues to work with others to build on the success of the first Memorial Days to ensure that this annual memorial occasion becomes embedded in the life of the town enabling local people to regularly mark their loving memories for those that have died during the previous 12 months. We are very pleased to be able to make our contribution to what we hope is going to be a significant annual event for all people in the Borough of any faith or no faith.



## Working with Young People

– to raise awareness and understanding of other faiths and supporting school curriculum needs through dialogue, discussion, talks and visits to places of worship across all of the 6 Major World Faiths as well as facilitating and helping with interschool projects.

### Primary Schools

The Interfaith Forum has and is working with the following Primary schools in the Borough - Belmont, St Antony's, Feniscowles, Meadowhead, St Barnabas and St Paul, St James, St Mary and St Joseph, St Matthew, St Pauls, St Stephens and is keen to work with more of our local Primary Schools and with others in the borough. Work has continued with Primary Schools across the Borough with the Interfaith Forum's Panel of people from 6 different faiths visiting schools and spending the whole morning there engaging with the pupils at different school.

These sessions have proved to be both interesting and challenging with the pupils asking many different questions of all 6 different faiths. The Interfaith Forum has received appreciative comments from the schools that have taken part as it is believed that such interaction between adult members of the 6 main world faiths with the pupils of our local schools makes an important contribution to the community cohesion dialogue within and across the Borough.

### Secondary Schools

The Interfaith Forum continues to work with the following High Schools in the Borough - Blackburn Central High School, Darwen Aldridge Community Academy, Darwen Vale, Our Lady and St John, Pleckgate, St Bedes, St Wilfrids, Tauheedul Girls, Tauheedul Boys and Witton Park.

This work has also included working with all these schools on marking the towns remembering of the Holocaust Memorial Day. Over recent years this has been particularly powerful as young people have deeply engaged in thinking about what happened and is still happening in our world today, and have significantly contributed to the event on Holocaust Memorial Day.

***This work is vital for our future peaceful living together***

### Blackburn College

The Interfaith Forum has continued to be involved in the college's Further Education student Induction Week' making contact with college students to bring the work of the Interfaith Forum to their notice and to try and establish a connection with students that are interested in this work.