

Connecting Communities



COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE  
MANUAL  
S E R I E S

# Community Centres Branching Out



DIALOGUE  
SOCIETY



## COMMUNITY DIALOGUE MANUAL S E R I E S

### To readers of this manual:

This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's Community Dialogue Manual Series. The PDF version of this and the other manuals in the series can be downloaded from [www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications)

If you have any comments on this, or any of the other manuals in the series, we would be very glad to have your feedback. Please email your comments to [manual@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:manual@dialoguesociety.org)

We would like to showcase the valuable work and effort of groups that use the Community Dialogue Manuals to help inspire other groups to take part also. Please get in touch and let us know how this manual helped you and your group with any photographs and testimonials. Please email these to [manual@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:manual@dialoguesociety.org)

If you represent a local stakeholder or public body and are interested in Dialogue Society consultancy please email [consultancy@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:consultancy@dialoguesociety.org)



The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nationwide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

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**DIALOGUE  
SOCIETY**

LONDON 1999

Registered Charity No: 1117039

## Speed Dialogue

First published in Great Britain 2011

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ISBN 978-0-9557349-8-4

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# Overview

01

## Preface

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences. It has done this through a wide range of events including community celebrations, interfaith sharing circles, and open cultural festivals as well as a broad variety of dialogue meetings and seminars.

The manual you hold in your hand is part of a series of ten Community Dialogue Manuals developed by the Dialogue Society to encourage interaction between members of different communities. The primary aim of the series is to help people to bring their communities together through a number of approaches and events that the Dialogue Society has found successful. We have always found that the most successful events have been those with clear objectives and where attention has been paid to detail. Therefore the manuals are full of advice, tips and checklists to help everything go smoothly as you plan, organise and host your own events.

This manual will help you to use a simple but effective activity to bring people together for worthwhile conversations. In speed dialogue, people are allocated a short time to talk one-to-one with a dialogue partner before moving on to have similar short conversations with a series of others. It is, in the experience of the Dialogue Society, an excellent way to help people to overcome barriers of shyness and difference. It could be used in a variety of contexts, either as part of a larger event, or as the central focus of an event.

Please get in touch with us to let us know if and how the manual was helpful, to give any feedback and comments about the manual's content, style and structure and with any other enquiries. Please see inside cover for contact details.

We hope that this manual and perhaps others will be helpful to you, and that you will enjoy bringing people together through the events you hold.

## The Dialogue Society



## Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to give inspiration and ideas for intercultural dialogue activities at general, cultural and religious community centres. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of dialogue activities and services for a community centre since that would be beyond the manual's reach and objective.

It is hoped that the ideas and know-how contained in the manual will inspire and assist some cultural or religious community centres to branch out and establish more and improved relationships with the wider community. While the Dialogue Society fully recognises the value and importance of the work done by such centres within their own communities, we believe that actively reaching out to other groups by engaging in dialogue activities also has great benefits for all concerned. It improves the relations of the cultural/religious community with others, breaking down misconceptions, fears and prejudices; it can give the religious/cultural community more of a voice with local stakeholders and it builds up goodwill and community spirit within the local area.

Community centres focused on a particular cultural/religious group are very well placed to help the community they serve to reach out to others in a positive manner.

General community centres may also wish to use the manual to explore ways of bringing together different cultural groups in the local area. Whether their focus is on welfare, social activities, education or any other area, investing a little time in dialogue projects is a thoroughly worthwhile way of serving their community; such projects may enhance life in the area for all concerned by promoting friendship and trust between different groups.

The manual also includes some suggestions for general community centre services that are not primarily dialogue activities. It is hoped that some of these will be new and interesting ideas for readers of this manual looking to expand the activities of their centre. The general work of these centres and dialogue-focused activities are very much connected. The more wide-ranging services a centre offers, the more engaging it becomes while strengthening the wellbeing, confidence and skills of those it serves. And the greater the wellbeing, confidence and skills of the service users, the better able they will be to interact positively with local people of different cultural, religious and social backgrounds.

In this manual you will find a range of suggestions for dialogue events and activities that could be organised using the resources of a community centre and drawing on volunteers from the community that uses that centre. The manual provides an explanation of each of these activities and advice, checklists and hints and tips to help you organise them. This section is followed by a short section of suggestions, in summary form, of general services, not specifically dialogue-focused, that a cultural/religious community centre might consider offering, with pointers to further relevant information on how to provide these. The overview of suggested events/activities should make it easier to navigate the events and activities covered in the main body of the manual. The appendices provide sample materials which may be helpful for organising the various activities and events suggested in the manual.

The PDF version of this and the other Community Dialogue Manuals can be downloaded from [www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications); you can copy and paste materials from the appendices to adapt for your own use.

This fairly long manual is not intended to be read from cover to cover. The intention is that reading the overview and flicking through will give you ideas for possible events and activities. You will then find support for whatever you choose to do in the relevant section of the manual. And perhaps on another occasion you will turn to it again for advice on a different activity.

## Aims and Objectives of This Manual

1. To encourage and support general/cultural/religious communities to engage in dialogue
2. To encourage the opening up of different communities to one another
3. To help eliminate any misconceptions or mistrust between different cultural and religious communities
4. To help give a minority community a voice and a recognised and positive presence in the local area
5. To help community centre members/service users to gain better access to local stakeholders, from politicians to the local police force, medical professionals to teachers
6. To provide strategies, tips, advice and know-how for organising successful dialogue events at a community centre
7. To provide ideas for new services that a general/cultural/religious community centre might consider offering to build on its strength and value as a resource for its own community

## Why Branch Out?

Directors, leaders, staff and volunteers at community centres may want to “branch out” and use their premises for dialogue activities in order to:

- increase interaction and friendship between their local cultural/faith-based group and the wider local community
- give their community greater access to local stakeholders
- give their community a stronger voice in the local area
- get rid of prejudice and mistrust between cultural, religious and community groups

## Who is This Manual For?

This manual is for the use of anyone involved with a cultural/religious community centre who is interested in any or all of the manual’s aims and objectives.

It is also intended to be helpful to general community centres concerned with some of the same goals.

Charities working for social cohesion, dialogue or citizenship, and public sector agencies concerned with the same goals might also find inspiration for useful projects in this manual.

## Working in Partnership

*For extensive advice on finding local partners and working in partnership please refer to the Building Partnerships Community Dialogue Manual.*

Consider inviting another community group, charity or religious congregation to work with you on the planning and organisation of any dialogue event you organise. The benefits of partnerships go far beyond just the sharing of the workload:

- It unites your ends and your means; your goal of promoting interaction and friendship between different groups is served even at the planning stages of your event as your group and another work together on the project and get to know each other.
- It expands your range of expertise by bringing in the skills of members of another group.
- It expands your range of guests, as you can invite all your partners' contacts to your event(s).
- It can bring you new insight into the perspectives and concerns of a different cultural, social or religious group.
- It increases the credibility of your dialogue work by showing that even as you plan your events you are practising what you preach and engaging with other groups.
- It can increase trust and interest in your organisation; some sectors of the community who are unfamiliar with your work may already know and trust your partner organisation, and be more inclined to get involved with your projects because of the connection.
- Even as you work on your project you are engaging in a form of dialogue, and probably growing in appreciation and understanding of a different group.
- It can establish a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship where each partner can sometimes benefit from the support, expertise, contacts and facilities of the other.

## Tips for Working in Partnership

- Attending events run by other organisations with objectives linked to your own will give opportunities to meet possible partners.
- It is a good idea to invite prospective partners to an informal, social meeting, perhaps over lunch or tea. If they are interested in what you do and in working with you on the project you propose, you can then arrange another meeting.
- Choose your prospective partners carefully. The most successful partnerships are those that serve the objectives of both/all partner organisations. You need

partners who share your enthusiasm for bringing the community together through your planned events and projects.

- When contacting an organisation to propose a meeting or collaboration on a particular project, emphasise the objectives that you share and show how collaboration makes sense for you both.
- Make sure that your partners have the opportunity to be involved at every level. If possible, try to get them involved in planning from the early stages, so that they are really part of the team.
- Make sure that your partners feel valued and recognised; be sure to include their names and details on any materials for a jointly organised event, and ensure that they are visible and acknowledged on the day.

## Overview of Suggested Events/Activities

### Dialogue Events and Activities

#### 1. Recurring Events

##### a) Stakeholder Surgeries..... 16

Inviting local MPs/councillors/doctors/teachers/police officers to hold a surgery at your community centre can both give your own members/service users access to these stakeholders and bring different sectors of the local community together for a valuable event.

##### b) Soup Days ..... 18

Offering free soup to local people of all faiths and cultures one lunchtime or evening is a gesture of sharing that can really bring the local community together.

##### c) Coffee Mornings ..... 19

A well-advertised coffee morning can be a great way to promote friendly relations between a diverse range of people and community groups.

##### d) Film Afternoons/Evenings ..... 19

Showing a carefully chosen film that different sectors of the community will enjoy can bring people together in a friendly, informal setting. Why not put on a vintage film day for more senior people in the area?

##### e) Music/Drama Group..... 21

Running a music or drama group open to all local people, or all local children, is an exciting way of bringing people of different faiths and cultures together in a creative and fulfilling context that builds the confidence of all involved.

#### 2. Occasional Events

##### a) Seminars and Talks..... 22

Why not arrange seminars on your premises on topics of interest to people from all sectors of the community?

##### b) Excursions/Visits..... 23

You might like to consider arranging an excursion for a mixed group, drawing on your own community for volunteers.

### c) Community Celebrations ..... 25

Hosting a community celebration on a day of national importance can bring diverse sections of the community together.

### d) Acknowledging Religious Festivals ..... 26

Gathering a group from your community to acknowledge the religious festival of another group through writing cards is a lovely way to spread goodwill and community spirit in the local area.

### e) Events Checklist ..... 28

Checklist for the above events.

## 3. Further Ideas for Opening Up Your Centre

### a) Sharing Space – Providing a Room/Hall for Events Run by Other Groups ..... 32

Offering the use of space for local events run by others is a great way to build goodwill and cooperation between groups.

### b) “Outsider” Advisors ..... 34

Inviting a trusted person from outside your own cultural/religious community to become an advisor or even to join your organisation’s committee or board of directors (if you have one) can give you an invaluable perspective on your work and demonstrates the openness of your organisation.

## General Events and Activities (in Summary Form)

### a) Home-School Link Project/After School Clubs ..... 36

These can be reasonably simple to set up and extremely valuable to local children

### b) Weekend Tuition Schools ..... 37

A great resource for local families that you can make available to children of all backgrounds

### c) Mentoring ..... 37

Widely available training can increase the quality of this invaluable system of regular, one-to-one support for young people

<b>d) Youth Counselling Service .....</b>	<b>38</b>
Providing young people with a sympathetic listening ear and confidential support and advice	
<b>e) Careers Advice .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Helping young people explore their options at key stages in their lives	
<b>f) Recreation and Social Activities .....</b>	<b>39</b>
There are endless possibilities; a few examples are offered here	
<b>g) Information, Translation, Advice and Advocacy Services .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Invaluable practical services for large sections of your local community	
<b>h) English Workshops for Youths .....</b>	<b>40</b>
These are of great benefit to young people seeking work or hoping to continue their studies, as well as to those who have recently arrived in the country with little English	
<b>i) ESOL (English Language) Classes for Adults .....</b>	<b>40</b>
A very valuable resource, removing barriers to confidence and to intercultural interaction	
<b>j) Computer Courses .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Partnership or sponsorship may enable you to provide these even if you cannot fund computers yourselves	
<b>k) Women's Support .....</b>	<b>41</b>
This may help combat isolation and respond to practical and personal needs	
<b>l) Self-Access Learning Resource Centre .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Why not make your centre a place where people can come to develop knowledge and skills?	
<b>m) Health Promotion/Information Events .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Events to inform and advise people on important health issues can be very helpful	
<b>Appendices: .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Sample materials and extra resources (as listed in "Contents")	





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# Dialogue Events and Activities

02

## I. Recurring Dialogue Events

These are events that will recur on a regular basis whether they are weekly, fortnightly, monthly or bimonthly. The idea is that these events are simple to organise and run and that visitors are aware that these events will take place at the allocated time, at the frequency specified.

One way of advertising these services is to include them in a general poster advertising the various services provided by your centre. Place copies of the poster in libraries, newsagents, Post Offices, supermarkets, council offices, town halls etc.

### a) Stakeholder Surgeries

**OBJECTIVE: to bring your community into contact with local stakeholders and bring the community together to benefit from the services provided/offered**

Holding a stakeholder surgery at your premises gives a valuable opportunity to your cultural/religious community and to the wider local community to communicate with people who make decisions or provide key services in the local area. If your centre is focused on a particular cultural/religious community hosting a stakeholder has another major benefit; it helps different cultural and religious communities to feel comfortable with each other when one of these communities invites others into its space to benefit from the services provided.

**Possible stakeholders/professionals to invite:**

- MPs
- Local councillors
- Police officers (neighbourhood officers/faith relations officers)
- GPs
- Accountants
- Solicitors
- Educational Psychologists/Therapists
- Family/Marriage Counsellors

MPs and councillors already hold regular surgeries for local people in community venues. You could offer to host their regular surgeries at your centre, but if you feel you are unable to commit to this then they may agree to host an additional surgery at your centre periodically.

You can also consider inviting certain professionals, such as solicitors and accountants, to provide pro bono advice.

Depending on your space and the commitment of the local stakeholders you could have more than one surgery running simultaneously. But as most professionals are

very busy, it will probably be best to rotate the surgeries so that different stakeholders attend in different weeks. One possibility would be to have four different surgeries operating once a month. For example, hold the local councillors' surgery<sup>1</sup> on the first week of the month, the police surgery on the second week of the month and so forth. That way, you would be hosting a local stakeholder at least once a week and providing a consistent service for your users.

### Checklist

- Write to local stakeholders proposing the possibility of holding a periodic (monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly) surgery at your centre (see Appendix 1 for sample email).
- Organise the room in which the surgery will be held, providing sufficient seating.
- Advertise the surgeries on notice boards inside and outside your community centre.
- Include the surgeries in a general services poster advertising your centre. Place copies of the poster in libraries, newsagents, Post Offices, supermarkets, council offices, town halls etc.
- Organise refreshments.

### Hints and Tips

- Emphasise in your advertising that the surgeries are open to all members of the public living in the area.
- Equally, make sure that everyone is made to feel comfortable and welcome; it is your space and it is down to you to make others feel welcome there.
- Refreshments can be provided or even sold for a small price to generate revenue for the centre. Perhaps provide some home-made refreshments, or something traditional in your culture. Choose something that you think most people will like.

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<sup>1</sup> It is very unlikely that an individual councillor will be able to attend every month. But if you approach a number of councillors you may be able to have a councillor surgery with one of them every month (with five or six councillors each attending once every five or six months).

## b) Soup Days

**OBJECTIVE:** to encourage friendly intercultural interaction and community spirit in the local area

Offering free soup to local people of all backgrounds at regular intervals in a particular slot during the day (such as 1-2pm on weekdays/particular days of the week) is a great way of inviting people to visit the centre and promoting cohesion. Food is always a good medium to bring different people together.

You can keep this dialogue activity quite simple. Find a volunteer to prepare the soup and advertise the 'free soup hour/slot' in your local area. You can advertise this service as part of a wider package of ongoing services at the centre in your local press and put up notices in and around your centre visible from the outside for passers-by. You can also leave details with neighbouring community and faith groups. In time, if you keep providing the service regularly, people will get to know about it through word of mouth. A simple, free, nutritious meal is a perfect setting for friendly conversation between local people of all backgrounds.

### Checklist

- Soup and bread rolls
- Seating area
- Publicity

### Hints and Tips

- Listing the ingredients used to make the soup is always useful for those with allergies or special dietary requirements.
- When setting dates remember important days which may restrict the attendance of a particular faith or community group. Jewish groups will not be available on the Sabbath, which lasts from sunset on Friday evening to sunset on Saturday evening.
- Encourage members of your community to meet and befriend as many people as possible from amongst the guest community. Resist the temptation to speak only to those whom you know from your own community.
- Posters and fliers are a good start to publicising your soup slots. To begin with you could also invite congregations from your local church/synagogue or from another faith/community group. Word of mouth can also be a very effective means of publicity and will play an important role in attracting guests as time goes on.
- Include the soup days in a general services poster advertising your centre. Place copies of the poster in libraries, newsagents, Post Offices, supermarkets, council offices, town halls etc.

- The aim of the soup days is to open up your community centre and encourage the local community to visit and join you. It is important to ensure you publicise your event as widely as possible, to avoid serving soup to only your regular community centre users.

### c) Coffee Mornings

**OBJECTIVE: to bring local people of different cultures, religions and social groups together in a relaxed, friendly setting**

Regular coffee mornings can be an excellent way to bring diverse local people together in a relaxed environment. If you hold these on a regular and frequent basis people will get to know about them through word of mouth. All you need is good coffee, tea and cakes or biscuits, preferably home-made by some willing volunteers! You could either hold free events simply to get local people together or charge a small price/ask for donations and raise some money regularly for a good cause. If you serve a special/unusual type of coffee and/or tea (whether it is special/unusual in taste or in the way it is prepared or served) it may enhance interest and word of mouth publicity.

#### Checklist

- Coffee, tea, cakes/biscuits
- Seating
- Publicity

#### Hints and Tips

- Also see those above under “Soup Day”, 1.b), page 18.
- Remember to put up notices in and outside the centre to attract passers-by.
- If you can, provide seating around small tables; this will make it easy for people to chat over their coffee.
- If you decide to use coffee mornings to raise money, make sure that the charity you choose will have appeal for the whole community. Local charities that benefit people of all cultural and religious backgrounds are good choices. If you need to fundraise for your own facilities/projects you could perhaps divide the proceeds of the event between your centre and a popular local charity.
- Providing some books and toys for children will be helpful to parents with young children.

## d) Film Afternoons/Evenings

**OBJECTIVE:** to encourage friendly interaction between people from different cultural groups by providing entertainment for all to enjoy

Organising educational, intellectually stimulating events can be a very worthwhile dialogue activity. But events that are simply fun and enjoyable certainly have their place too, and may attract a wider audience. Showing a carefully chosen film that different sectors of the community will enjoy can bring people together in a friendly, informal setting.

Your choice of film is key. You could try to attract a broad audience by showing a popular film that people may have missed in the cinemas, a seasonal film at Christmas or a really summery film in the summer. A 'U' or 'PG' certificate film will increase your potential audience by making the evening accessible to families with children. One option is to focus on families and choose a popular children's film. A good cultural film set in a different part of the world can be a great way to introduce people to another culture.

A vintage film advertised among older people's groups and by targeted invitations, held in the afternoon, perhaps with tea and cake, could be a lovely way of bringing together the older people of the local area.

### Checklist

- Choose film
- Equipment for showing film
- Licensing
- Seating
- Refreshments
- Publicity

### Hints and Tips

- Be careful to avoid films with content that part of the community will find offensive; you don't want to put off people of a particular background.
- Try to enhance people's enjoyment of the evening by making your centre as comfortable and inviting as possible. You could see if people can lend some cushions and bean bags.
- You can also make the evening more fun by providing refreshments on the theme of the film; for example, if the film is set in Italy you could provide pizza or Italian biscuits. Include this in your advertising.
- Be absolutely sure that you have the necessary equipment and that everything is working. If you can, have alternative equipment as a backup plan in case of any technical problems.

- Regular film events can be included in a general services poster advertising your centre. Place copies of the poster in libraries, newsagents, Post Offices, supermarkets, council offices, town halls etc.
- You will need a **premises licence** or a **temporary event licence** (TEN) to show films at your centre. TENs are not expensive, are quite simple to obtain and are useful for one-off events.<sup>2</sup> However, if you are showing films regularly it is worth obtaining a premises licence, which will cover all your showings. This should in fact be cheaper than obtaining a TEN as your centre will probably be **exempt from the usual premises licence fee**. Contact your local council's licensing section for advice and applications.
- You are also legally required to have a **film screening licence**, even if you do not charge your guests. However, obtaining a licence is not complicated, and if you are not charging guests and are not advertising showings outside your premises it will not be very expensive (from £81 per year plus VAT). See <http://www.filmbank.co.uk> for guidance and online licence applications.

## e) Music/Drama Group

**OBJECTIVE: to bring local people of different faiths and cultures together for creative activities which build the confidence of all**

A music or drama group can be a great context in which to bring different people together. Working on creative projects together can really help people to discover and appreciate each other as individuals.

The simplest way to start a music/drama group on your premises is to invite a teacher to hold sessions in the centre without charging for room hire, or charging a discretionary rate. If you do this it will make financial sense for the teacher to work at your centre and you should be able to find one without too much difficulty. You can help promote a diverse group by advertising among your members and more widely.

### Checklist

- Find a teacher- ask at local schools, look for adverts in local papers, libraries and shops, and try searching on the internet.
- Decide on a target audience. Is the group for adults or for children? If children, what age-range will you accommodate?
- Decide on a regular slot for the lessons.
- Assign volunteers to open up and prepare the centre for each session.

<sup>2</sup> Applying for a TEN currently costs £21. You will need to fill in a Temporary Event Notice form and send it to the Council's licensing section, and to the local police, **a minimum of ten working days** before the event. The Licensing section will be able to give you the appropriate form and advise you on whom you should send the police copy to. An individual can apply for up to five TENs in a year, and a single premises can be used up to twelve times.

- Provide refreshments after the session, if only squash/juice and biscuits.
- Assign somebody to take responsibility for health and safety (fire procedure, first aid kit etc).
- Spread the word among your members/service users. Advertise with posters/information in schools, youth clubs, shops, Post Offices, libraries etc. You could also put a note in the local press. (See Appendix 2 for a sample email to schools concerning relevant services at the centre.)
- Include the group in a general services poster advertising your centre. Place copies of the poster in libraries, newsagents, Post Offices, schools, council offices, town halls etc.

### Hints and Tips

- It is probably best to choose an activity that is accessible to all without much equipment or prior experience. Singing and drama are good options.
- Advertising will help you achieve a good mix of participants. Don't rely on one approach: contact schools and community groups and religious congregations rather than focusing on one of these.

## 2. Occasional Dialogue Events

These are events that you can hold at various intervals throughout the year and can mark special days/occasions, but do not necessarily recur on a regular basis. They will probably require more planning and attention to detail. Whilst some 'hints and tips' and checklists are given below for each type of programme a more extensive general checklist is given at the end of this section.

### a) Seminars and Talks

**OBJECTIVE: to bring the local community together to hear about and discuss an issue of general interest**

Holding a public seminar or talk on an interesting topic provides a valuable service to your local community. Inviting people into your community centre for meaningful and open discussion can also be a great way of tackling prejudices and encouraging mutual trust and appreciation between different cultural groups.

If there is a university not too far from your centre, have a look at the website and see who is doing work that may be of interest to your local community. Sociology, politics, religious studies, education and environmental science departments may all be good places to look.

### Checklist

See "Events Checklist", 2.e), below p28



## Hints and Tips

- Think carefully about what will be of interest to a wide range of local people. If there are particular social difficulties of some kind in the area people may like to hear of research into the causes of these. It may also be interesting to host someone who can talk about the history of the local area, or about an interesting historical figure who lived locally.
- If the area has significant groups of different religious faiths, a presentation on a particular faith may be appreciated. Be careful to refrain from doing anything that gives the false impression that you/your group are trying to convert people. You could consider organising a series of talks on different faiths; this would be educational for people of all faiths and none and encourage dialogue and mutual appreciation.
- You could consider a seminar series in which you discuss different aspects of a particular topic or theme in a number of seminars.
- You could invite more than one speaker for a panel discussion on a particular topic.
- At the start of the event someone should welcome guests and introduce your organisation, the speaker and the event, including the programme for the evening.

## b) Excursions/Visits

**OBJECTIVE: to promote intercultural interaction and  
to get people together for a fun and memorable day out and/or  
to increase interest in and understanding of different cultures and religions and/or  
to increase interest in and understanding of the UK with its different regions**

Excursions can be a great way of enhancing friendships previously made at regular events held at the centre. You may wish to organise a trip with regular attendees of the soup days or coffee mornings or you could use this as an opportunity to extend the invitation to other groups who have not yet attended programmes/events at the centre.

**Various kinds of excursions/visits can meet the objectives given above. Below are some examples:**

- Fun excursions for culturally/religiously mixed groups. Why not arrange a fun family day out for a mixed local group? You could go for a picnic, or to the zoo, or to a national park. Why not give people an extra reason to make time for an enjoyable family outing, with the added advantage of getting people from different cultural and religious groups together?
- Visits to other cities/regions. You could be slightly more ambitious, and organise a visit to another area of the UK- perhaps a city with exciting cultural or historic features, or a place of great natural beauty. Of course, if you have friends in another region, they may be able to help.

- Visits to different places of cultural/religious importance, ideally with a culturally/religiously mixed group. This can be done in your own area; many people will not have visited all the interesting places of worship and culturally interesting areas.

### Checklist

- Decide where you want to go - will you stay in your city/local area or go further afield? Local or regional tourist information centres are good places to obtain ideas on places to visit. Useful websites are:
  - <http://www.enjoyengland.com/>
  - [www.visitbritain.com/](http://www.visitbritain.com/)
- Decide whether to invite another group(s) to co-organise the trip with you.
- Invite guests well in advance (at least two months). (See Appendix 7 for sample email.)
- Send guests emergency contact forms to fill in and return (see Appendix 8).
- Work out what the trip will cost and how it will be funded. Will participants pay for themselves? If so, try to keep the costs down wherever you can. You could consider looking for funding for larger more extensive trips. Look out for any relevant grants in your area.<sup>3</sup> (It is worth looking out for small grants further in advance - preferably at least six months.)
- Organise transport.
- Organise food – will you be taking your own food or will you eat out? If eating out, reserving tables in advance will ensure that your chosen food outlet can accommodate the size of your group.
- Book any visits/guided tours that can be pre-booked.
- Book a tour guide if necessary.
- Decide on a photographer for the day.
- Distribute a contact name and number and assign a meeting place in case of people detaching from the group.
- Prepare feedback forms and ask participants to complete them at the end of the excursion. This will help you plan your next activity better and identify areas for improvement.

<sup>3</sup> Your county, city or borough will probably have a local support and development organisation which may advertise and advise on small grants for charities and community groups. See information on page 32 in “Sharing Space: Providing a Room/Hall for Events Run by Other Groups”, 3.a).

The “Funding Central” website is also well worth consulting. It is “a free website for charities, **voluntary organisations and social enterprises**. The site provides access to thousands of funding and finance opportunities, plus a wealth of tools and resources supporting organisations to develop sustainable income strategies appropriate to their needs.” See <http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/Default.aspx>

See also <http://thebigsociety.co.uk/what-is-big-society/faq/> for a list of possible funding opportunities.

- Send/email photographs taken on the day and display them on your website, if you have one. Include the link in any follow up/thank you emails.

## Hints and Tips

- It is worth booking visits wherever you can to avoid spending long periods queuing, or even being unable to get in.
- Make sure you have emergency contact numbers for participants and also information on any medical conditions you may need to be made aware of in advance. You can ask participants to complete a short form detailing all this information (see Appendix 8).
- Encourage volunteers to engage with the visitors NOT group with each other.
- Encourage everyone to speak English.
- Holding a post-event debriefing meeting with staff/volunteers can be extremely beneficial to evaluate the event and discuss improvements for next time. Ensure that everybody's efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.

## c) Community Celebrations

**OBJECTIVE: to bring the local community together and encourage interaction, community spirit and social cohesion**

A community celebration can have a big impact on the sense of community spirit in your local area. There are endless possibilities of what you could include in celebrations for St George's Day, May Day, New Year, Diwali, Hannuka or Eid. But you don't have to make things too complicated. Refreshments, music and perhaps one or two speeches are all you really need. You can add other entertainment if you have the time and resources.

This kind of larger-scale event is an ideal opportunity to work in partnership with another organisation or community/religious group, sharing the workload and getting to know your partners. (For a sample email for contacting a local faith/community group to suggest working in partnership, see Appendix 3.)

## Checklist

See "Events Checklist", 2.e), below p 28

## Hints and Tips

- Also see those above under "Soup Day", 1.b), page 18
- For a large-scale community celebration it is definitely worth inviting local VIPs, such as your local MP, the Mayor or councillors. Give plenty of notice, ideally at least two months (see Appendix 5 for a sample letter). As well as giving your event a higher profile and attracting more local people, inviting

local stakeholders gives people from your own cultural/religious community a chance to meet with them. (See the *Building Partnerships* Community Dialogue Manual for further advice on ensuring VIP attendance at your event.)

- NB if your event will include the performance of a play, an exhibition of a film, the performance of live music or the playing of recorded music **and** your **venue does not have a premises license**, you will need a Temporary Event Notice. **Incidental (background) music is an exception and does not require a license.**
- You will need to fill in a Temporary Event Notice form and send it to the Council's Licensing section, and to the local police, **a minimum of ten working days** before the event. The Licensing section will be able to give you the appropriate form and advise you on whom you should send the police copy to. An individual can apply for up to five TENs in a year, and a single premises can be used up to twelve times. Currently an application costs £21.
- If you are going to play recorded music you will need a **licence from the Performing Rights Society**. The PRS for Music website (<http://prsformusic.com>) has a "Charity and community" section (<http://prsformusic.com/users/businessesandliveevents/musicforbusinesses/charityandcommunity/Pages/default.aspx#10>). You can call them on 08453093090 or can request a callback via the website.

## d) Acknowledging Religious Festivals

**OBJECTIVE: to spread goodwill between different cultural/religious communities**

Preparing and distributing cards, sweets, or other small gifts on the occasion of the festival of another religious/cultural group is a gesture of generosity and goodwill that can go a long way to enhancing community spirit. It is also a nice thing to do on a general UK holiday.

Gather a group of volunteers from your community to make preparations at your centre, and distribute cards/gifts together, by handing them out in a public place, taking them to relevant community/religious centres or delivering them door to door.

**For more extensive advice and ideas please see the *Celebrating Festivals* Community Dialogue Manual.**

### Checklist

- Decide on a festival.
- Decide what you want to distribute (Food? Cards? Gifts?).
- Decide how and where you would like distribute your cards/gifts.
- Check with relevant people/authorities that this is possible and make

arrangements with them. Remember to explain clearly that your aim is simply to encourage goodwill and friendship between different religious/cultural groups.

- If you are visiting a place of worship discuss whether your group would be welcome to attend a service and ask for guidelines on etiquette for the service. (For advice on attending religious services see Appendix 12 and the *Celebrating Festivals* Community Dialogue Manual.)
- Buy cards, or materials to make them. You may want to involve children and encourage them to design cards.
- And/or buy sweets/chocolate/other foods/gifts or everything you need to make your gift parcels.
- For wrapping: wrapping paper/tissue paper/cellophane, ribbon, sticky tape, scissors.
- Leaving yourselves plenty of time, gather together all your volunteers at the centre and make/write/prepare/wrap your cards/gifts/food items.
- Make sure all those who will help with the distribution know what they will say to explain what they are doing and why.
- If you are taking your cards/gifts/food to a place of worship/community centre make sure that someone is ready to give a little explanation of what you have brought and why.
- Distribute your cards/food/gifts! Smile and wish people a happy Christmas/Easter/Hanukkah/Eid etc.

### Hints and Tips

- Be careful in your choice of festival. There are many significant religious festivals that are only celebrated by a minority of people belonging to the religion. It's best to choose one of the most popular festivals, like Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah or Eid al-Fitr/al-Adha. Choose a festival that you have seen people celebrating, or check with a local acquaintance from the relevant group whether many people celebrate the festival you have in mind.
- The dates of popular festivals are given in the *Celebrating Festivals* Community Dialogue Manual. In addition, most councils will have an interfaith or faith forum who will have a year planner showing the celebrated days within the borough, or who will be able to advise you.
- If you decide to prepare your cards/food/gifts on the day you want to distribute them, make sure you leave plenty of time to do this.
- If you decide to distribute food, try to avoid foods to which some people may have dangerous allergies, such as nuts and sesame seeds. Unless what you give is very simple and recognisable, include a little card with ingredients on it.
- If you have children who would like to assist, take them with you; people

tend to respond well to children.

- If you distribute your gifts in a public place you can distribute to people of any/no faith and any culture, even if the festival in question belongs to a particular group.
- You could find out about traditional greetings for the festival you choose, learn to say them and use them when you do your gift distribution.
- Don't forget to smile and be friendly.

### e) Events Checklist

This section is for use in planning larger scale events which are done on a less frequent basis but which require more planning and attention to detail. It is ideal for organising your seminars, excursions, community celebrations and acknowledgement of religious festivals. Please note that not all points will be relevant to all events; when planning you may want to go through the checklist and highlight those which are relevant to your event.

#### Planning: Why, What, How, When, Where

(At least 2-3 months in advance)

- All elements of your event should tie into your main objectives. So it is important that you are absolutely clear on what your main objectives are.
- Tell your organisation/group about the idea and see who is interested in helping to plan the event. Form a planning group to take responsibility for organising the event, but remember to keep the wider group updated regularly on how you're doing. Your planning group will need to meet regularly, perhaps once a fortnight with further discussion as necessary between meetings. You will need to discuss and clarify your objective with the planning group so that everyone has the same goal in mind.
- One of the first things that you should do in your planning group is to decide whether to invite another group(s) to work in partnership with you. Make contact with them as quickly as possible so that representatives of their group have the option of joining the planning group early on and being fully involved in the process.
- Decide what you want to include in the event (food, drinks, extras- music, displays etc).
- Set a date. Think about when you should hold your event to attract a representative group from your local community. Make sure that no other significant events fall on the same day. Your event may be better attended if you hold it at the weekend. Note, though, that if you are inviting practising Jewish neighbours or Jewish groups they may not be available on the Sabbath, which lasts from sunset on Friday evening to sunset on Saturday evening.

## Practical Priorities

(At least 2-3 months in advance)

- Work out what the event is likely to cost altogether.
- Ensure that your organisation/group can meet the cost of the event. If you don't have a budget for this kind of event, plan how you are going to meet the costs. Asking for donations from religious/community groups to which you belong, and from partner organisations, may be enough. You may need to charge a small price for the food, although you should try to avoid asking guests for too much or you will put off those with less disposable income. (See "Excursions/Visits", 2.b), above, page 23 for further ideas.)
- If you are considering including a performance of music or drama in your event, find out if your venue has a premises licence; if it does not, consider whether you need to apply for a Temporary Event Notice (see "Community Celebrations", 2.c), above, page 25).
- If you are playing copyrighted recorded music remember to get a licence from the Performing Rights Society (see "Community Celebrations", 2.c), above, page 25).

## Managing Volunteers

- As soon as you can, make a list in your planning group of all the jobs that need to be done and delegate responsibility for different areas of work: design, cooking, cleaning and decoration, any entertainment etc.
- Assign a person to take responsibility for health and safety.
- Decide on a photographer for the day.
- For a large event it will be helpful to make a human resources plan for the day, listing all the jobs that need to be done and the number of volunteers required. You can then fill in the names of volunteers assigned to each job and make sure that everything is covered. For an example of a Human Resources plan, please refer to the Noah's Pudding Community Dialogue Manual.

## Design

- Design posters
- (For a community celebration) design an event booklet to hand out at the event, giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events. (For an excursion provide a booklet or simply an information sheet with the programme, contacts etc.)
- Design fliers

## Marketing and Invitations

(Begin 2-3 months in advance)

- Discuss and decide on a strategy for inviting guests and make a time plan.
- Put up posters advertising the event in local shops, places of worship, Post Offices etc. Where possible leave piles of fliers/invitations for people to pick up. Or use posters with tear-off strips giving essential details of the event.
- At least two months in advance, send letters to the Mayor, councillors, MPs and other important people in your community inviting them to the event (see Appendix 5 for sample letter).
- Issue invitations to other local stakeholders (the local police force, teachers, academics and health professionals), community groups and religious groups (see Appendix 6 for a sample invitation email).
- Give plenty of invitations to the priest of your local church, or the rabbi of your local synagogue and ask him/her to announce the event after a service. Even better, go along and invite the congregation yourself (see Appendix 12 for advice on visiting religious services).
- In all invitations ask guests to inform you of any special dietary requirements.

(4-5 weeks in advance)

- Depending on the response to your advertising so far, post invitations to local residents, particularly in neighbourhoods from which there has been little response so far.
- Announce details of the event to your religious congregation (e.g. after Friday prayers/a service) or to your community group and give out invitations/fliers.
- Prepare a press release (see Appendix 4 for a sample press release).

(In the last month)

- Contact as many media outlets as possible two weeks in advance.
- Send reminders to registered guests.
- Call media outlets to follow up one week before the event.

## General Practical Preparations

(In the month before the event)

- Prepare and print feedback forms (Appendix 9 gives a sample form).
- Prepare an introduction to the event.
- Buy plenty of pens for feedback forms, contact list etc.
- Make sure that there are enough black bags for the rubbish.



- Decide if any type of music is to be played at the event and find any music you want to use.
- Make sure you have the necessary equipment for playing music and/or for a PowerPoint display (laptop and projector) or speech (microphone). Test all the equipment in the relevant area.
- Prepare to provide a kids' play area with toys and children's books.
- Check health and safety considerations: fire alarm; accessible, clearly signposted fire exits; first aid kit; first aider<sup>4</sup>; fully informed volunteers.
- Decide on the type and quantity of food that you will provide, bearing in mind approximate numbers suggested by the response to the promotional material. Buy/order the food or arrange who among your volunteers is going to contribute what.
- Buy a visitors' book or a pad of paper for your contact list. You may wish to include a column that guests can tick if they wish to help at future events.

(In the final few days)

- Make a list of all the jobs that need to be done on the day and in the final stages of preparation and assign these to specific people.
- Buy/pick up/prepare the food.
- Have a meeting with all the volunteers a day before the event and go through checklists, making sure everyone is clear on what they are doing on the day of the event.
- Make sure the venue is thoroughly cleaned and decorated the night before the event.
- Air the venue out on the day.
- Put out a visitors' book/contact list and pens for people to leave contact details and brief comments.

### During the Event

- Volunteers should arrive at least an hour in advance for a briefing and final check.
- Remember to include safety information in the introduction to the event

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<sup>4</sup> St John's Ambulance (<http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/training-courses.aspx>) and the British Red Cross (<http://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/>) provide a range of first aid courses. Local branches can also offer first aid cover for events at competitive rates.

Alternatively, if you know a doctor or nurse personally you could ask him/her to be present at the event and provide First Aid cover.

See <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Accidents-and-first-aid/Pages/Introduction.aspx> for a First Aid guide.

and to notify guests that photography (and filming) will be taking place if that is the case.

- Volunteers should stick to the job assigned to them to make sure that everything is done properly.
- Volunteers should engage with the visitors NOT group with each other.
- Encourage volunteers to speak English throughout the event as a courtesy to guests.
- Keep things clean and tidy, paying particular attention to the area where food is served.
- Before visitors leave someone should ensure that they have signed the visitors' book/contact list and have filled in their feedback forms and handed them in (Appendix 9).
- After the event the volunteers will need to stay to clean the venue and dispose of any rubbish left behind.

### Follow-up

- Write thank you letters to anyone who helped.
- Within a week, get in touch with all who came on the day and thank them for coming (see Appendix 10).
- Put all the photographs from the day on the website, if you have one, and send the link with any thank you emails.
- Also include any memorable comments.
- Hold a post-event debriefing meeting with the planning group and volunteers. Evaluate the event and discuss improvements for next time. Ensure that everybody's efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.
- And then, keep in touch with your guests and get to know them better. Suggest that they attend/help with other events.

## 3. Further Ideas for Opening Up Your Centre

### a) Sharing Space - Providing a Room/Hall for Events Run by Other Groups

**OBJECTIVE: building goodwill and cooperation between local community and religious groups**

Inviting other groups to use your premises for worthwhile events is an excellent way of increasing positive interaction between diverse groups from different cultural and religious communities.

You may be aware of a number of community/religious groups in your area that you could get in touch with to offer the use of a room or hall, but there may be others that you are not aware of, particularly if they are small and just meet in people's homes. There are ways to find other local groups:

The local council website may be helpful for finding groups and their contact details. For example, Islington Council's website has a services directory: <http://www.islington.gov.uk/Directories/listsectionpagethreecol.aspx?dir=LTC&title=Directory of Local Services>.

Local support and development organisations, which exist to support voluntary organisations and volunteers in a particular borough, district or city, often have similar directories. For example, Voluntary Action Islington has a "Find a Local Organisation" section: <https://remote.vai.org.uk/db/>

Find your local support and development organization through:

- <http://www.navca.org.uk/membersdirectory> (England)/
- [http://www.voluntaryactionsotland.org.uk/third\\_sector\\_interfaces.html](http://www.voluntaryactionsotland.org.uk/third_sector_interfaces.html) (Scotland)/
- <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/grants/voluntary/contact/?lang=en> (Wales)

If you want to identify more religious congregations in your area a local multi-faith/interfaith forum may help. Islington Faiths Forum, for example, has an extensive directory for the Islington Borough: <http://www.islingtonfaithsforum.org.uk/database.html>

Look for equivalent directories in your own borough/locality.

The national interfaith network can help you find your local forum: <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/members.htm>

- Once you have identified groups that you would like to contact, write and explain who you are, what you are offering and why. If they are interested you can then meet and discuss the activities you are prepared to host and when they would be able to use the room/hall. A face to face discussion over tea or lunch will also allow you to get to know each other and each other's organisations. (See Appendix 11 for a sample email.)

### Hints and Tips

- Look out for local groups with aims and interests that overlap with your own. It would make sense to offer space to these groups; there may be projects on which you could work in partnership.
- Make sure you are fully informed about the activities that other groups engage in on your premises. If you host controversial activities this could damage the reputation of the centre and your relationships with other groups.

## b) “Outsider” Advisors

**OBJECTIVE:** to gain an outside perspective on your organisation and demonstrate its openness to other cultural/religious/social groups

Inviting a trusted person from outside your own cultural/religious community to become an adviser or even to join your organisation’s committee or board of directors (if you have one) gives you an invaluable different perspective on your work as well as demonstrating the openness of your organisation.

If you do not have a board of directors or official advisors you could still ask a suitable person to become an informal adviser, meeting with you at times when it would be helpful to you to have an outside perspective.

### Hints and Tips

- This is a step to take only with someone you really know and trust.
- You may find potential advisors through the dialogue activities outlined above; perhaps a local stakeholder whom you invite to hold a surgery at your centre will be a possible adviser; perhaps the director of a community group that you host will be an appropriate person, or perhaps an academic visiting for a seminar will be suitable.
- It is important that you explain the role to potential advisors at the beginning to avoid confusion at a later stage. It would be helpful to clarify points such as:
  - Is the role formal/informal?
  - Will they have any legal responsibilities?
  - Will they have voting rights on an Executive Board which makes decisions?
  - Will their input be acknowledged on the website/brochure?
  - How can they stop being an adviser?
- If you take this step, make sure that you explain your reasons to your members/service users. Indeed, it may be worth explaining the idea and the reasons for it and allowing members/service users to give feedback before you make the decision to appoint the new adviser(s).



COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE  
**MANUAL**  
S E R I E S

# General Events and Activities

# 03

## General Events and Activities

These ideas are presented in the hope that some of them will be new and interesting ideas for readers of this manual looking to expand the activities of their centre. The general work of these centres and dialogue-focused activities are very much connected. The more wide-ranging services a centre offers, the more engaging it becomes while strengthening the wellbeing, confidence and skills of the community it serves. And the greater the wellbeing, confidence and skills of that community, the better able it is to interact positively with other cultural and religious (or non-religious) groups in the local area.

One way of advertising these services is to include them in a general services poster advertising your centre. Place copies of the poster in libraries, newsagents, Post Offices, supermarkets, Council offices, town halls etc.

### a) Home-School Link Project/After School Clubs

**OBJECTIVE: to provide children with somewhere safe to go and something stimulating to do after school**

- After school clubs of great and lasting benefit to young people, can be set up with just one member of staff and a few reliable volunteers per club.
- Depending on the qualifications/experience of your staff and the needs of the children, you may wish to consider offering: a homework club, a literacy club, a chess club, a reading club, an art club or a music group.
- While clubs at a cultural community centre are likely to attract children from that cultural community in particular, in the interests of social cohesion and of serving the whole community you can make it clear that they are open to all.
- To promote safety, consider liaising with schools to organise transport from the schools to your premises. If the school is in walking distance a member of staff could come to meet the children.
- Ask schools to help advertise your services (see Appendix 2 for a sample email to schools concerning relevant services at the centre).
- You should have a child protection policy. See [http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity\\_requirements\\_guidance/Charity\\_governance/Managing\\_risk/protection.aspx#4](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/Charity_governance/Managing_risk/protection.aspx#4)
- You can find sample policies online, for example on the Volunteering England website:  
<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/Core+Themes/ProtectionandSafeguarding/Example+child+protection+policy.htm>
- Staff/volunteers should have CRB checks. See the Charity Commission's guidance at:  
[http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity\\_requirements\\_guidance/](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/)

[Charity\\_governance/Managing\\_risk/protection.aspx#7](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/Charity_governance/Managing_risk/protection.aspx#7).

- See also [www.direct.gov.uk/crb](http://www.direct.gov.uk/crb) (information for individuals); [www.businesslink.gov.uk/crb](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/crb) (information for organisations); <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/crb/> (further information on the Criminal Records Bureau and its services).

## b) Weekend Tuition Schools

### **OBJECTIVE: to raise the standards of children's achievement at school**

- This is a very valuable resource for local families which may be particularly helpful for those who speak a language other than English at home.
- You can make the service available to local children of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, promoting friendship between children from different communities.
- If you have enough suitable volunteers to help with teaching, one member of staff may be sufficient to organise the work of the school.
- Make sure that teaching supports the children's learning according to the National Curriculum.
- Support may be particularly valuable for children preparing for GCSEs, and for those starting secondary school (age 11).
- It may be most helpful to focus on core subjects such as English, Maths, Science, IT and other languages spoken and studied by children in your community.
- You will need a child protection policy and CRB checks for staff and volunteers (see "Home-School Link Project" section a) above, page 36).
- See the Charity Commission's guidance on child protection at: [http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity\\_requirements\\_guidance/Charity\\_governance/Managing\\_risk/protection.aspx#7](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/Charity_governance/Managing_risk/protection.aspx#7)  
See also [www.direct.gov.uk/crb](http://www.direct.gov.uk/crb) (information for individuals); [www.businesslink.gov.uk/crb](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/crb) (information for organisations); [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crb/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crb/) (further information on the Criminal Records Bureau and its services).
- Ask schools to help advertise your services (see Appendix 2 for a sample email to schools concerning relevant services at the centre).

## c) Mentoring

### **OBJECTIVE: to provide regular one-to-one support to young people**

- A mentoring scheme can be of great benefit to young people, providing regular personal and educational support through a friendly and natural relationship with a mentor. Through regular meetings, for social as well as educational activities, mentors can gain the trust of mentees and be in a unique position to offer help and advice when this is needed.

- The valuable youth mentoring services provided by many cultural community centres can be enhanced by expert training, which is more widely available than many realise.
- The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation provides training for those who run mentoring schemes. The website also has many helpful written resources on mentoring and advice on sources of funding for mentoring projects: <http://www.mandbf.org.uk>
- Some local councils run training for mentors which your volunteers may be able to access. Check the local council website for any information on such training, and/or try calling a contact person from their Young People services.
- A range of training for those working with young people in the voluntary sector is available from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services: <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/>  
Their “Progress” training scheme may be of interest: <https://ncvys.skillsprofile.org/www.NCVYS/login.asp>
- Remember that you will need a child protection policy and CRB checks for staff and volunteers (see “Home-School Link Project” section a) above, page 36).

### d) Youth Counselling Service

**OBJECTIVE: to provide confidential support to young people who need someone to talk to**

- Another very valuable service for young people is a counselling service providing a sympathetic listening ear and confidential support and advice.
- You will need a private room.
- The counselling should be strictly confidential.
- The counsellor should abide by the British Association for Counselling’s “Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy” (see [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)).
- Counsellors should have undertaken training in counselling. For more information on training please visit: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/accreditation/Accredited%20Course%20Search/index.php>
- Remember that you will need a child protection policy and CRB checks for staff and volunteers (see “Home-school link project” section a) above, page 36).
- Advertise via schools (see Appendix 2 for a sample email to schools concerning relevant services at the centre).



## e) Careers Advice

**OBJECTIVE: to provide young people who use the centre with important advice and information about education and career options and their future plans**

- Careers advice can be an extremely valuable resource for young people trying to make decisions about their future.
- Your area may have an Education and Business Partnership (EBP) which could help you find work placements for service users. To find yours, try typing the name of your county or nearest city and the words “Education and Business Partnership” into a search engine such as Google.
- If possible, provide a range of resources for young people to use in their careers research: internet access with guidance on useful websites,<sup>5</sup> handbooks and publications.
- Remember that you will need a child protection policy and CRB checks for staff and volunteers (see “Home-School Link Project” section a) above, page 36).
- Advertise via schools (see Appendix 2 for a sample email to schools concerning relevant services at the centre).

## f) Recreation and Social Activities

**OBJECTIVE: to provide opportunities for local people to have fun, relax and socialise**

- It may be particularly valuable to provide facilities/services for young people without much to do in their leisure time.
- If you can fund it, you could consider using a room at your centre as a leisure space with equipment such as a pool table, table tennis table, darts, and board games.
- Sports activities using local facilities could be arranged, and competitions and tournaments held.
- Excursions could also be organised for service users. Trips to UK sites of historical/cultural importance (Shakespeare’s house in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick Castle, Sherwood Forest, the British Museum etc) could be of particular value to bilingual young people struggling to establish their identity.
- Remember that you will need a child protection policy and CRB checks for staff and volunteers (see “Home-School Link Project” section a) above, page 36).

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<sup>5</sup> For example, <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/workandcareers/index.htm> ;  
<http://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

- Advertise via schools (see Appendix 2 for a sample email to schools concerning relevant services at the centre).

## g) Information, Translation, Advice and Advocacy Services

**OBJECTIVE: to provide key practical services to local people**

- This service could include any of the following: advocacy services, interpreting/translation and help with form filling; information and advice on health, welfare rights and social services; advice on housing and council tax; legal advice; personal/confidential advice; referrals to other statutory and voluntary organisations.
- An appointment system would make these services easier to manage, but you could also have a drop-in session for emergencies.
- Services will reach those most in need of them if they can be offered free. You may be able to find professional volunteers - translators, lawyers etc prepared to offer services pro bono. It is worth exploring possible partnerships with the local council and other community organisations to help with staffing this sort of project.

## h) English Workshops for Youths

**OBJECTIVE: to help raise the level of English skills among young people, increasing their confidence and success in daily life, social interaction, education and work**

- This service can be very helpful for young people preparing to find work or continue their studies, as well as those who have very little English and need to acquire the language skills needed in daily life.
- The service should be provided by qualified teachers.
- It is helpful to develop partnerships with local schools which may be able to refer pupils.
- Teachers should bear in mind the National Curriculum and the skills pupils need to succeed at school (writing, comprehension, study skills etc).
- Remember that you will need a child protection policy and CRB checks for staff and volunteers (see “Home-School Link Project” section a) above, page 36).
- Advertise via schools (see Appendix 2 for a sample email to schools concerning relevant services at the centre).

### i) ESOL (English Language) Classes for Adults

**OBJECTIVE: to improve language skills among adults whose first language is not English, building their confidence, increasing their employability and helping them to be an active part of society**

- The classes should be provided by qualified teachers.
- Participants would be able to make use of the other services whilst at the centre such as the information and advocacy service, self access resources etc.
- Partnerships with local colleges may be helpful in finding teachers.

### j) Computer Courses

**OBJECTIVE: to equip adults with the necessary IT skills to find jobs**

- Adults who do not know how to use computers may find it a great help to gain IT skills.
- Partnerships may make it possible to provide this service. Partnerships with the Council, funding bodies, local businesses, schools or other community groups may help you to fund your own computers or to loan them from another organisation for a time. Perhaps a school could lend you laptops during the school holidays.
- Teachers should be trained in IT, or be experienced volunteers.
- If possible, make arrangements for participants to take exams and gain recognised qualifications.

### k) Women's Support

**OBJECTIVE: to provide information, education and support to women**

- A cultural community centre is well-placed to provide invaluable services to women from that cultural community, informing them of services and opportunities, promoting their education and offering practical and personal support.
- Valuable services that might be provided include: advanced language and communication skills training; outreach work/home visits for isolated and lonely families; counselling; advice on housing, welfare benefits, immigration and employment; advice, support and counselling for those facing domestic violence; bereavement support; excursions to places of interest.
- Referrals may be made to Social Services and other agencies with volunteers acting as interpreters where necessary.

- An annual health conference could be arranged to promote awareness of health issues specifically for women.
- Partnerships with the Council and other community organisations can be very helpful in providing these services.

### l) Self-Access Learning Resource Centre

**OBJECTIVE: to provide information and learning resources to support and promote education and learning within the community**

- A room with self-access learning resources could be of great value to users, providing a safe, inviting and flexible learning environment in which to build on skills and knowledge in their own time.
- Possible resources to include:  
Books; journals; daily newspapers and newspaper archives; community information; self-help publications; publications on study skills and effective learning; PC's and internet access; video and audio facilities; information on other support services of particular interest to your cultural community; publications/papers in other language(s) spoken by your cultural community.
- Promote intercultural interaction by making this resource available to all local people and including it in information on your services displayed in local press, shops, libraries etc.

### m) Health Promotion/Information Events

**OBJECTIVE: to provide information on important health issues**

- Health professionals or social workers may be able to provide advice or presentations on using health services and on important health issues for people in the local community with whom you have contact.
- Possible topics of interest: keeping well in the winter, (for older people - with a GP, nurse or social worker); children's vaccinations (with a GP or nurse); understanding NHS services (with a GP, nurse or social worker).
- Volunteer translators could provide a valuable service at such events.
- The NHS online directory provides information and contact details for a range of health services and institutions: <http://www.nhs.uk/ServiceDirectories/Pages/ServiceSearch.aspx>
- You may be able to find contact details for social workers through your local council website.



COMMUNITY  
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# Appendices

You can copy materials from appendices via:

[www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications)

# 04

## Sample Email for Contacting a Local Stakeholder Concerning Surgeries

(NB, when sending an email to the Mayor, a councillor or an MP it is worth attaching to the email a copy of the message in letter form so that their assistant can print it off for them)

Dear [Title Surname],

For the Mayor: Dear [Mr/Madam] Mayor,

For a councillor: Dear Cllr [Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am writing to you on behalf of [Name of Community Centre/Organisation] at [Address]. [Mission statement. Example: Our Centre exists to further the social welfare, education and integration of the Somali community through a range of resources, services and activities, and to contribute to the local community as a whole through our services and events.]

We are currently looking to diversify our services and to reach out to the wider local community through new projects, contributing to a greater sense of social cohesion and citizenship. One of these new projects is a Stakeholder Surgery initiative. We hope that several local stakeholders will be able to visit our centre each month, giving people from our neighbourhood the opportunity to raise questions and concerns and obtain professional advice. In addition to yourself we are approaching local [delete or alter as appropriate: policy makers, health care professionals, police representatives, legal advisors and accountants].

[To the Mayor/your MP/a local councillor:]

We would particularly like to give people from our area a chance to speak with yourself about local issues. I am, of course, aware of your regular surgeries. However, we wondered if you would be able to find the time to hold an additional surgery at our centre from time to time or to hold one of your regular surgeries at our centre. This would be greatly appreciated by people from this area and from the [specify cultural community]; the convenient and familiar location would undoubtedly be a draw for them. We feel that such surgeries could significantly contribute to the sense of citizenship in our particular area and among the [specify cultural community] and that bringing people together for democratic engagement in this way would considerably enhance both integration and social cohesion.

[To a health professional/police officer/other public sector professional:]

We would very much like to be able to give local people the chance to drop in to the centre to discuss [health issues and the local services available/crime, public

order and policing issues in the local area] in a comfortable, familiar and informal setting.

[To an accountant/solicitor/other private sector professional:]

We would very much like to offer people from our area the opportunity to speak with an expert about [legal questions or concerns/financial issues/....]; our knowledge of the challenges faced by some local people suggests that the service would be highly beneficial. We hope to provide this service without charge, enabling those with small incomes to access valuable advice and guidance. We are therefore looking for professionals willing to contribute to this service on a pro bono basis.

If you would consider contributing to this project I would be delighted to discuss it with you when your diary permits. Perhaps if you have the time you could join us for lunch at the Centre one weekday in the coming month? Alternatively, perhaps I could drop in to visit you at your convenience, or give you a call.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Sample Email for Contacting a Local School Concerning Relevant Services and Events Offered by Your Centre

Dear [Title Surname],

[My name is [Name Surname]/I am [Child's Name Surname]'s mother/father] and I am writing to you on behalf of the [Name of Community Centre] to inform you of some of our services which I hope will be of interest.

This school year we will be running three services targeting young people.

- A home-school link project
- Young people's English workshops
- A drama club

The home-school link project is intended to provide children with somewhere safe to go and something stimulating to do after school, [state days and times. Example: Monday – Friday, 3.30pm – 6.30pm]. Services provided include [list services. Example: homework club, Art workshop, chess club...]. Parents from our primary service user community suggested the value of such a project and we ran it successfully last term.

- The service is open to all local children and we hope that you will be able to help us advertise it more widely.
- Further, we would like to be able to offer a transport service to our Centre from the children's schools, and hope that we might be able to discuss the practicalities of this.

The English workshops will be held on [Saturday afternoons, 2.30pm-5pm], beginning on [Date]. We will have two parallel sessions: one for those who are still learning Basic English, and one for Year 9- Year 11 students looking to improve their English skills to prepare for exams, employment or further education. All who might benefit are welcome. The workshops are free.

The drama club will be on [Sundays, 2.30pm-4.30pm], beginning [Date]. Our teacher is [Name Surname], a qualified drama teacher [give brief details of experience]. The aim is for students of a variety of different backgrounds to enjoy a fulfilling, creative activity together and to have the excitement and satisfaction of putting on a play at the end of the year. The cost per student per term will be only [state cost].

All our members of staff and volunteers working with children have CRB checks and are appropriately qualified/experienced.

I hope you will be able to pass on details of these activities to children and parents. I attach an information sheet outlining the services for publicity purposes.



I am also happy to meet and discuss any queries you have and the question of transport for the home-school link project. You would be most welcome to come for tea at the Centre after school on any day over the next two weeks, or indeed to join us for lunch if your diary permits. Alternatively I can visit the school at a mutually convenient time. If it would be more appropriate to speak to one of your colleagues please be so kind as to point me in the right direction, or to forward this.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Sample Email for Contacting a Local Faith/Community Group

Dear [Title Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am writing to you on behalf of [Name of Organisation] to ask whether you or any of your contacts at [Name of their Organisation] would be interested in working with us on a new project that we are planning.

We are hoping to host a community New Year's celebration at our centre at [Address]. The idea of the event is to bring people from all sectors of the local community together to celebrate and socialise, with refreshments, music and entertainment provided by local community groups. We hope that the event will promote interaction and friendship between all different groups within the local community.

We hope to hold the event within the first two weeks of January, preferably on Saturday 2nd January. If you have any suggestions I would be very glad to hear them. We hope to host around [Estimate of Numbers] guests.

We would be delighted to have the input of any interested members of your group. We feel that working in partnership is the best way of organising community events; as well as broadening the range of experience and abilities contributing to the project it would give our group and yours a chance to get to know one another. If any of your members would like to join the planning group they would be most welcome, and the help of volunteers at any stage of the process would be greatly appreciated.

Would you and others from [Name of Organisation] be interested in coming to meet our planning group to discuss any possibilities? If you are free at [Suggested Times] on [Suggested Dates], please let me know and come for a discussion and a cup of tea with us at [Location].

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Starting as we mean to go on: Somali Community Centre welcomes all to New Year Celebration**

*Cultural Community Centre set to reach out and broaden scope*

(Hackney, [Date, Year]) At [Time] on [Date] the Hackney Somali Community Centre at [Address] is expecting a diverse group of approximately 100 local people for a community celebration of the New Year. The idea of the event is to bring people from all sectors of the local community together to celebrate and socialise. This is one of a number of initiatives by the centre aimed at proactively reaching out beyond its primary service users to encourage interaction and friendship across cultural and religious lines.

Local community and music groups have rallied round to support the event, and the evening will feature performances from [Name of Group], [Name of Group] and [Name of Group] in addition to a special guest performance from the highly acclaimed [Name of Performer/Group]. The Worshipful the Mayor of [Name of Borough/District/Town], Cllr [Name Surname], will be giving a short speech.

[Name Surname], Director of the Hackney Somali Community Centre said: “We are so pleased at the level of interest in this event. We wanted to do something for the whole community, bringing different cultural groups together simply to have fun and mark the beginning of a new year. The Centre is a key resource for the Somali community, but we want its contribution to go further.”

Cllr [Name Surname] of Islington Borough Council said: “I am delighted that the Somali Community Centre is taking this initiative to reach out to the whole area. While politicians this week are debating who is responsible for social cohesion or the lack of it, this Centre is providing an example of the kind of proactive attitude that really works. I wish the Centre every success in this and in their other new projects.”

#Ends#

### **Notes to editors**

1. For further information contact [Name Surname], Director of the Centre.
2. The Hackney Somali Community Centre was founded in [Year]. It aims to further the welfare, education and integration of the Somali community through a range of resources, services and activities, and to contribute to the local community as a whole through services and events. See [Website].
3. Other new projects being developed include a new choir for local children of all backgrounds and weekly stakeholder surgeries open to all.

## Sample Letter of Invitation to a Local Dignitary

[Your Name]  
 [Position and Organisation]  
 [Address], [Postcode]  
 [Telephone]  
 [Email]  
 [Date]

[Title Name Surname]  
 [Position and Organisation]  
 [Address], [Post Code]

Dear [Title Surname],

[For the Mayor: Dear [Mr/Madam] Mayor],

[For a councillor: Dear Cllr [Surname]],

### **RE: Invitation to Community New Year Celebration at [Name of Community Centre]**

On behalf of [Community Centre/Organisation] I would like to invite you to attend and speak at a New Year Celebration to be held from [Time] to [Time] on [Date] at the Centre at [Address].

The idea of the event is to bring people from all sectors of the local community together to celebrate and socialise, with refreshments, music and entertainment provided by local community groups. We hope that the event will promote interaction and friendship between all different groups within the local community. We anticipate a good turnout and look forward to welcoming local people from all walks of life. I attach a provisional programme for the event.

We would be honoured to have your presence for the evening, and would like to extend the invitation to your [wife/husband/partner and family]. If you would be prepared to say a few words at the beginning of the evening we would greatly appreciate it.

Please contact me by telephone or email to confirm your attendance, or for further information. If you are able to attend please let me know if you or your guest[s] have any particular dietary requirements.

Yours sincerely,

[Name Surname]  
 [Position]  
 [Organisation]

## Sample Email Invitation for a Community Celebration - to a Community/Religious Group

Dear [Title Surname],

On behalf of [Community Centre/Organisation] I would like to invite you and all members of [Name of Community/Religious Group] to a New Year Celebration to be held from [Time] to [Time] on [Date] at the Centre at [Address].

The idea of the event is to bring people from all sectors of the local community together to celebrate and socialise, with refreshments, music and entertainment provided by local community groups including [Name of Group] and [Name of Group]. We hope that the event will promote interaction and friendship between all different groups within the local community. Families are very welcome to come with children; there will be children's activities and entertainment. A provisional programme is attached.

We would love to see members of [Name of Religious/Community Group] at the event. Please be so kind as to circulate this invitation among members of your organisation.

Please contact me by telephone or email to confirm your attendance, or for further information. Please let me know if any attendees have particular dietary requirements.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Sample Email to a Community Group/Religious Congregation Inviting Participation in an Excursion/Visit

Dear [Title Surname],

I am emailing on behalf of [Name of Community Centre/Organisation] to invite members of your group to join some of our members for [an excursion to [Name of historical site/area of natural beauty/museum etc]]/an intercultural exploration of [our city/Name of city/town]]. The aim of the trip is to bring local people of different cultural backgrounds together for an interesting and enjoyable day out. It should be a great opportunity for us all to get to know one another and to explore [the wonderfully diverse cultures of our city/a beautiful part of the English countryside/a fascinating historic site...]. We hope to [give brief explanation of planned activities].

The provisional date for the trip is [Date]. We are concerned to keep costs down, and the trip should cost only [state cost] per person.

I attach a provisional programme for the excursion [include if you have one].

Would you be so kind as to circulate this invitation to your [group/congregation]? If they would like to hear more I would be delighted to come and explain the idea in more detail at a [meeting/service]. Could those interested please confirm their attendance by [date] by replying to [contact name and number], so that we have an idea of numbers participating. Further, if anyone would like to join our planning group and help to organise the event, or to volunteer their assistance at any stage, I would love to hear from them.

I do hope that this will be of interest to some of your members. I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

# Sample Emergency Contacts Form

[Description. For example: Intercultural exploration trip], [Date]

## ESSENTIAL PARTICIPANT INFORMATION:

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Number:\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Person 1

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Number(s):\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you:\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Person 2

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Number(s):\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you:\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any allergies?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any medical conditions of any kind that it may be helpful for us to know about in an emergency?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Feedback Form

### New Year's Celebration Feedback

For each question please tick the box closest to what you feel.

Were you made to feel welcome?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, very <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not very <input type="checkbox"/> No
Were the aims of the event clear?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, very <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not very <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you feel the event achieved those aims?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, entirely <input type="checkbox"/> Largely <input type="checkbox"/> To some extent <input type="checkbox"/> No
How closely did the event follow the advertised programme?	<input type="checkbox"/> Entirely <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty well <input type="checkbox"/> Not very well <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all
How was the entertainment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very well <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty well <input type="checkbox"/> Not very well <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all
How was the food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Ok <input type="checkbox"/> Not so good
Would you want to come to another community event like this?	<input type="checkbox"/> Definately <input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> Probably not
Where do you expect to see the people you met today again?	<input type="checkbox"/> We have arranged to meet <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting a religious service <input type="checkbox"/> At another event like this <input type="checkbox"/> Nowhere
Please add any comments: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
<div style="text-align: right;">Thank you!</div>	



## Sample Thank You Email for Attendees

Dear [Title Surname/First Name (depending on whether you spoke on first name terms at the event)],

I am emailing on behalf of [Name of Community Centre/Organisation] to thank you for attending our [Name of Community Event] on [Day]. It was a pleasure to meet you and we really appreciate your support for our event. Photos from the event are now on the website: [Website URL]

We are planning to hold another event to bring the community together. [Give brief explanation of what the event is.] If you would like to help in any way with this event, provisionally planned for [Date], I would love to hear from you. We will be having a planning meeting on [Date].

I will be sending out details of the event nearer the time. Meanwhile, I am attaching a notice of our regular services. I hope to see you back at the Centre before too long, perhaps at one of our new “Soup Slots”! [- reference to a particular service you want to promote to the wider community].

Once again, many thanks for your support.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Sample Email to a Community Group Offering Use of a Room

Dear [Title Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am emailing on behalf of [Name of Community Centre/Organisation]. [Give a short explanation of your organisation. For example: The Hackney Somali Community Centre was founded in [Year]. It aims to further the welfare, education and integration of the Somali community through a range of resources, services and activities, and to contribute to the local community as a whole through services and events.]

We were very interested to find out about your work in the local area [with/on] [people they work with/projects they work on]. We are keen to collaborate with organisations with goals related to our own, and wondered if we could be of any assistance to you.

If you would like to use a room in the Centre for some of your activities we would be glad to lend you the space [at no charge/for a nominal fee] at times when it is not in use. I attach our current programme of activities to give an indication of our current use of the main room. There is a smaller room upstairs which may be used concurrently if relative noise levels permit.

If this, or other forms of collaboration, would be of interest to you perhaps we could meet and discuss the possibilities. If you are free to join my colleagues and me for tea one afternoon in the coming month you and any colleagues would be very welcome.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

## Advice for Attending Religious Services

(For guidance on attending other places of worship please see the *Celebrating Festivals* Community Dialogue Manual.)

Dress codes vary between religious denominations and even individual churches/synagogues. The congregation of a “high” Anglican church may dress very formally while that of a large Baptist church may come to church in jeans. However, fairly smart, modest dress is unlikely to be out of place in any church or synagogue.

### In Church

You can join in with what is being said or sung when it seems appropriate, or keep silent if you feel more comfortable doing so.

Only confirmed Christians take the bread and wine at communion. You would be welcome to go up to the altar rail for a blessing at this point, but as the blessing makes reference to God as Trinity and the priest often makes the sign of the cross you may prefer just to stay in your seat. It is quite usual for some members of the congregation to do this.

### At the Synagogue

Do not wear a tallit, the prayer shawl, as this is a sign of a specifically Jewish obligation to the law. If you are offered one by an usher who is unsure whether or not you are Jewish politely decline it. Men should cover their heads as a sign of respect if the men of the congregation do so. Skullcaps or kippahs/yarmulkes will often be provided at the door for those who do not have one. In some Orthodox congregations married women cover their heads with pieces of lace and in some Reform congregations all worshippers wear kippahs. If you are a woman and do not cover your hair anyway it is respectful to cover your head in such synagogues. Coverings will often be provided.

In Orthodox synagogues men and women sit separately.

Try to follow the rest of the congregation when they sit and stand but don’t worry if you get it wrong. You can try to follow the service in the siddur, service book and the Humash, the Torah book. If these are in Hebrew they usually include English translations. They usually begin at what is, in English terms, the “back.”

Join in with the congregation’s words as and when you feel comfortable saying them. Wearing a kippah and sitting and standing<sup>6</sup> with the congregation is not an

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Kohn, “Sample Etiquette Guide for Guests,” in “Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ideas and Primer for Interfaith Families,” InterfaithFamily.com, [http://www.interfaithfamily.com/files/pdf/Bar\\_BatMitzvahIdeasandPrimerforInterfaithFamilies.pdf](http://www.interfaithfamily.com/files/pdf/Bar_BatMitzvahIdeasandPrimerforInterfaithFamilies.pdf).

expression of religious allegiance, only of respect. Bowing is a more significant religious act in the synagogue service. If you do not want to join the congregation when they bow, just remain sitting/standing. If wine and bread is shared at a Kiddush or blessing after the service you are free to accept or decline it. It does not have the same meaning as the Christian sacrament; it is just bread and wine that is blessed and shared. However, you will not be under any obligation to share the offerings.

### At the Mosque

Dress conservatively. Men should wear long trousers. Women's clothing should cover arms and legs, and should not be tight. Girls aged twelve and over should dress modestly in this way. Covering hair with a scarf is a respectful gesture although this will often be optional. Where visitors are requested to wear headscarves spare scarves are sometimes provided. Wear clothes in which you can comfortably sit cross legged on the floor. Visitors may be requested to sit on the floor, although a few chairs may be available for elderly visitors or those whose health makes it difficult for them to sit on the floor.

Do not bring food, drink or any animal into the mosque and do not smoke.

Remove your shoes before entering the prayer hall, leaving them in the designated place to collect afterwards. It is customary for men and women to worship separately in the mosque. Women's prayer facilities will often be on a gallery level or if there is only one main prayer hall, it will be divided into a men's and a women's section. Your host will direct you to the appropriate section.

Avoid walking in front of someone who is praying and be quiet when people are engaged in prayer. During prayer, observe quietly at the back of the mosque, or as directed by your hosts. Be careful not to point your feet towards the Kibla, the direction of prayer.

Some Muslims do not shake hands with people of the opposite sex, so it is best not to go to shake hands with people of the opposite sex unless they do.







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This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's  
Community Dialogue Manual Series:

1. Building Partnerships
2. Noah's Pudding
3. Celebrating Festivals
4. Community Fairs
5. Community Engagement Dinners
6. Community Centres Branching Out
7. Speed Dialogue
8. Open Mosque Day
9. Fasting Breaking Dinners
10. Media Engagement

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# COMMUNITY DIALOGUE MANUAL S E R I E S

## Connecting Communities

