

## Faith Communities

In line with the emphasis that the Government has placed on the role of faith communities in LSPs, they are also recognised as key components of Community Networks in many places. Often this involves the development of a thematic faith network as a component of the Community network.

In many places CEF has been used to help the development of the faith networks (employing workers, funding conferences etc.)

Further information on Community Networks, CEF and faith communities can be obtained from:

**Martin Miller**

**Manchester Diocesan Board for Ministry & Society**

5th Floor, Church House, 90 Deansgate,

Manchester, M3 2GJ

**0161 828 1448**

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*The Faith in partnership series is:*

- *an information resource for people of faith as they engage with their local communities in the new partnership agenda*
- *a joint enterprise, between The Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester various ecumenical partners from the North West*

*Whilst we currently provide this resource for the Christian Community we welcome contributions from other faith traditions.*

**For copies of the FIP leaflets and further information please contact**

**Margaret Walsh**

**Partnership for Theological Education**

**Luther King House**

**Brighton Grove, Rusholme**

**Manchester, M14 5JP**

0161 249 2533

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**Partnership for  
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# The Faith in Partnership Series

*An information resource for people of faith  
as they engage with their local communities*

**No 8 Community Networks**

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## The Involvement of the Voluntary and Community Sectors in Local Strategic Partnerships

### ***This leaflet***

- Gives a brief explanation of Community Networks
- Explains the role of CEF
- Identifies a contact person who can provide more information

## Can the Voluntary & Community Sector be an Equal Partner?

The Government wishes to ensure that the voluntary and community sectors are full participants in the new partnership structures – Local Strategic Partnerships, or LSPs (see FiP No 7) - which have been established to co-ordinate public service delivery within local authority areas.

**The voluntary and community sector is a massive and varied group and there are limited places on LSPs.**

How therefore, do you adequately involve the breadth of the sector in LSPs and the partnership agenda and remain an effective decision making body?

**The Government's solution is to establish a community/voluntary network**

This network is charged with carrying out specific tasks:

- consultation with the community to establish its views and represent those views to the LSP
- outreach to hard-to-reach groups to draw them into the process
- capacity build to enhance the sector's ability to participate
- select representatives to sit on the LSP's formal structures on behalf of the Network

**The network seeks to be as representative of the local community as it can be.**

### **How are the Networks Established?**

A lead body, appointed by the local Government Office, initially brings the Network together. This organisation is chosen from the local voluntary and community sector (often the Council for Voluntary Service).

In consultation with other groups the lead body formulates plans for the development of the Network.

In the areas designated as Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (See FiP No 5) special funding, called Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), is available to help with development of the Network. In some cases the lead body is will also be the 'Accountable Body' for CEF. In others, different organisations perform the distinctive roles but they must work closely together.

### **How do the Networks function?**

The lead and accountable bodies are responsible for drawing up plans on how the Network will be structured, how it will develop and how CEF will resource it.

Different structures have been chosen in different areas but many are based on other locality based (residents groups for example) or issue based networks (disability groups for example) or a combination of both.

### **These come together to create a Network of Networks**

**As the Networks develop they become responsible for determining their own structures and procedures.**

In some cases (particularly the areas which qualify for Community Empowerment Fund) the complexity of the task in developing and maintaining the Networks have been recognised and Network co-ordinators have been employed.

### **Non Neighbourhood Renewal Areas**

The task of bringing together the voluntary and community sectors is more difficult in areas which do not have CEF. Nonetheless there is still a vital role for the sectors. In some cases modest resources have been made available by the relevant local authority.

### **How is CEF disbursed?**

£36 million over three years has been set aside nationally for CEF. Allocations for each area have already been agreed. It is distributed in yearly tranches to each of the neighbourhood renewal areas and each Community Network must draw up yearly proposals on its use based on local priorities. It also agrees procedures (bidding processes etc) for distribution of CEF to the wider sector.

In some areas CEF has been delegated by the main Community Network to the smaller component networks (locality or thematic). This provides essential resources to those networks to fund their own development.

*(CEF must be used to develop the participation of the Voluntary and Community Sectors in LSPs. It cannot be used to fund project work. There is a separate fund which can do this called Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chests. )*