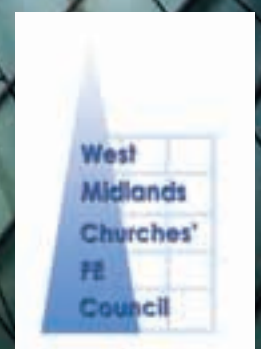
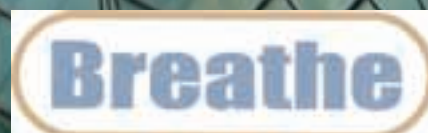


Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC)

SMSC development in Further Education: an audit of the current understanding amongst colleges in a targetted area of the West Midlands Region

Andy Haynes



SMSC development in Further Education: an audit of the current understanding amongst colleges in the West Midlands Region

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Foreword

Early in 2010 the West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council (WMC FEC) and Dare2Engage (D2E) began a joint project in the region comprising Birmingham, the northern half of the Black Country, Staffordshire and north Shropshire. The aim was to encourage the delivery of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) provision in the colleges of this area, by offering appropriate support at a management, staff and student level (known for shorthand as the West Midlands 'Breathe' project). This project was timed to coincide with the publication of the non-statutory guidance on delivering SMSC support in the learning and skills sector, developed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS).

As part of the project, the project officer Andy Haynes was asked to produce a report on what already existed in colleges in terms of the provision of, and plans for, SMSC development. Initially an in-house report, it was quickly realised that the information and insight contained in this document would benefit a wider audience.

The 14 colleges visited vary enormously in their demographic and historical context and so provide a useful snapshot of Further Education and SMSC provision in 2010/11.

The findings have provided all concerned with a much clearer picture, enabling the work in the West Midlands to move forward in a more focussed way to address the real needs of the area.

West Midlands 'Breathe' project steering group, 2011

Acknowledgements

The report's author and the Breathe project steering group would like to thank all those who have supported the development of this report. Particular thanks go to those staff in participating FE colleges who gave up their valuable time to support this SMSC audit.

Breathe is a curriculum resource for 16-19 year olds for exploring spirituality from a Christian perspective wholly fitting for a multi-faith context. The resource was developed by Dare2Engage which is wholly funded by the Jerusalem Trust.

The Breathe project in the West Midlands region is supported with funding from Dare2Engage, the West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council, St Peter's Saltley Trust and Central England Quakers.

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This report is an audit of the current level of understanding of work within West Midlands FE colleges around Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) development and provision within a core project area covering Birmingham and Solihull, the Black Country, Staffordshire and north Shropshire.

The overriding findings are that there are extremely varied levels of understanding and work regarding SMSC provision within West Midlands FE Colleges and a lack of support to help Colleges develop their provision.

Understanding of the term and core principles of SMSC amongst FE Colleges varied from total unfamiliarity to a full grasp and engagement with the SMSC agenda. A number of FE Colleges are also delivering SMSC activities, but did not recognise them as such and subsequently were not effectively identifying their SMSC activity. This could have an impact regarding OFSTED self assessment and inspection.

In particular, understanding and interpretation of the term 'Spiritual' was wide and varied amongst respondents spoken to – but there was a consistent reaction of wariness and trepidation when discussing a college's approach to this element of SMSC. The majority of respondents were very wary of using this term to describe any activity they delivered as they felt it carried strong religious connotations. Respondents often avoided talking about Spiritual support for students as they were concerned about accusations' surrounding the promotion of one faith over another. A number of college representatives also reported dealing with religious extremism which they had encountered from a range of faiths.

Once they had been helped to develop a broader understanding of the SMSC agenda, it was found that few Colleges went beyond the surface of the SMSC agenda. Equal Opportunity policies and student behaviour/respect contracts were often cited as being the main routes through which Colleges would deliver activity on SMSC. However when explored further this activity was very much focused upon ensuring compliance within the student body. Examples given would include cultural and faith awareness weeks which focused upon 'telling' students that different faiths and cultures existed, but stopped short of going into further detail as to what it meant to be a member of a particular faith or how someone's cultural back ground affected their lives.

The majority of interviewees would also immediately refer to their enrichment and tutorial programmes when discussing SMSC delivery. Whilst it was encouraging to see that Colleges were seeking to address the holistic needs of their students, the focus remained upon the development of softer skills that would see students progress effectively; for example, job readiness, I/V techniques etc. This study found that there was little, if any, space created within the College curriculum for personal exploration of aims and ambition in life (Spiritual) or how students saw themselves engaging in and contributing to society (Moral, Social, Cultural).

Resources - in particular the lack of time, funding and expertise - were a constantly recurring theme amongst respondents. For many FE Colleges, resources were very much focused on achieving hard outcomes (i.e. retention and achievement) and this seemed to result in a low priority being placed upon non-academic activities such as broader student support services and tutorial/enrichment time. However, whilst enrichment/tutorial resources were found on the whole to be under considerable pressure, there was clear evidence amongst Colleges spoken to of a strategic shift towards not merely talking about a holistic approach to supporting and developing the learner, but a commitment to make this happen. Respondents would often quote the evidence provided through their assessment of their Every Child Matters (ECM) and Safeguarding activity to substantiate this point. However, time will tell if Colleges take the SMSC agenda forward over above statutory requirements such as safeguarding.

There are numerous examples of good practice in SMSC development across the West Midlands. However, these are often unfortunately buried away within College activity and often go unrecognised – internally or externally. Only one FE College amongst those participating was identified as having an effective grasp of SMSC and could evidence the delivery of the SMSC agenda across a broad range of curriculum and extra curricula activities. This College also explored issues of belief and membership of various faiths and cultures within their student body and appeared successful at raising engagement and understanding.

In summary, West Midlands FE Colleges' understanding of the SMSC agenda is limited and it is as a result of this limited knowledge that activity within Colleges is also limited. However, as the attendance at a recent (Dec 2010) LSIS SMSC launch event testified, those West Midlands FE Colleges which attended are keen to explore how they can take delivery of the SMSC agenda forward.

Therein lies the challenge for Colleges and the Breathe project: how to turn this interest into real commitment delivering meaningful improvements to the SMSC activity delivered within West Midlands FE Colleges.

Key Findings

This audit identified a number of key themes within its findings. Further context and explanation of these are explored within the section 'Complete Findings' (p. 15ff), but the key findings are summarised below:

FE Colleges' current approach to/understanding of SMSC provision

- SMSC as a whole is not fully understood.
- Social aspect is seen as been linked to development of softer skill development (i.e. confidence building, communication skills)
- Spiritual/Cultural aspect seen as:
 - being delivered through promotion and awareness/enforcement of equality policies
 - More about awareness that other people come from different cultural/religious backgrounds, rather than what this means.
- Activity regarding Moral aspect appeared very limited.
- Some reluctance to explore spiritual issues further for fear of causing offence or accusation of proselytism.

SMSC within the curriculum and learning

- Tutorial and enrichment time frequently seen by Colleges as being the main avenues through which they deliver SMSC activities.
- Tutorial time is seen as compulsory whereas enrichment time is seen as optional.
- Tutorial activity normally delivered by mainstream teaching staff with tutor group responsibilities.
- Enrichment activity seen as additional to main curriculum and delivered by dedicated staff.
- SMSC activities were broadly felt to have a more enrichment focus and required specialist staff to deliver activities.
- ECM/safeguarding/H&S have a high profile – often addressed in tutorial time.

Staff responsibilities and engagement in the delivery of SMSC (operation and management)

- Responsibility for SMSC appears fall within the remit of Student/Learner services.
- SMSC is seen as being part of and tutorial/enrichment programmes.
- Delivery of SMSC activity affected by staff capacity to deliver and access to resources.

Resources used in SMSC provision

- No SMSC resources were identified by those surveyed.
- Colleges are keen to access resources for SMSC delivery – especially online.
- Breathe main kit sessions (see p.10) seen as being good for one off events.
- Keen to discuss seeing Breathe as part of an extended tutorial programme.

Multi-faith Chaplaincy

- In both colleges with and without multi-faith chaplaincy services there was a limited understanding of the role and concept of multi-faith Chaplaincy.
- Where Colleges had multi-faith Chaplaincy activities they were recognised as being inclusive and not just about faith issues.
- Concern over availability of resources to support multi-faith Chaplaincy.

Partnership working

- Colleges keen to engage with faith communities, but often do not know how to do that.
- Respondents felt that the Christian faith was the dominant faith that was seeking to engage with them.
- Some reluctance by Colleges to engage with faith communities or faith issues as a whole for fear of difficulties arising from proselytism and accusations of favouring one faith over another.

Key Conclusions

There are two main conclusions to be drawn from this audit of SMSC within West Midlands FE Colleges:

1. Poor level of understanding regarding SMSC.
2. Limited access to expertise and resources to assist Colleges to develop their SMSC activity.

Key Recommendations

The Breathe project (see p.10) is in an ideal position to deliver upon both these areas.

Firstly, the engagement and development work being undertaken by the report's author is continuing to develop Colleges' awareness of SMSC and to reduce their trepidation in delivering SMSC activities. Plans are in development for a further West Midlands regional SMSC workshop where more time can be spent developing an understanding of SMSC and what it can look like in practice for Colleges.

Secondly, there is a need for the development of resources for SMSC activity which have an FE learner focus. The Breathe resource is excellent in its ability to engage students in an innovative way; however the current delivery mechanism is not proving conducive for Colleges to incorporate into their timetables. Consideration needs to be given to developing the Breathe resource and other SMSC resources that can be delivered within a 60 minute tutorial and enrichment time period.

To this end, the author is working in partnership with a West Midlands FE College and educational professionals in order to develop a range of resources to deliver sessions direct with students. The author is also exploring how FE staff can be trained in the delivery of the developed material, providing FE Colleges with a sustainable way of resourcing and delivering SMSC activity.

Materials are being trialled and developed from September 2011.

Summary of *Breathe* Project

The 'Breathe Project' is a partnership between Dare2Engage (D2E) and the West Midlands Churches' FE Council (WMC FEC), with additional funding from St Peter's Saltley Trust and from Central England Quakers.

The purpose of this project is to contribute to the development of provision for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education (SMSC) in further education colleges in the West Midlands region - with particular reference to Birmingham and the Black Country and Staffordshire - through the organisation of 'Breathe' days (using the interactive Breathe resource developed by Dare2Engage: www.breatheresource.org.uk), work with college staff to develop further resources and activities, and through the development of partnerships between colleges, local churches and other faith communities where appropriate.

Whilst the project may result in the development of connections with colleges across any part of the West Midlands region as a whole, WMC FEC and D2E have set a particular focus on the area covered by the Anglican dioceses of Birmingham and Lichfield (the 'core project area' - incorporating the cities of Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Stoke on Trent, much of the Black Country, Staffordshire and northern Shropshire), in which there is particular scope for the development of multi-faith student support and chaplaincy in FE.

Report Objectives

The objective of this report is to present an audit of the current level of understanding of work within colleges around the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of students within the core project area.

The result of this audit will be used by the *Breathe* project steering group to inform the direction and use of the projects resources. The report will also be shared with key agencies within the FE sector to focus discussions and resources to support the delivery of the SMSC agenda within FE Colleges.

Methodology and approach

This research report:

- Built a database of FE Colleges within the West Midlands
- Established contact details at West Midlands FE Colleges for staff members with responsibility for delivery of SMSC activities.
- Conducted a series of telephone and face to face structured conversations with FE College staff with a responsibility for the SMSC agenda. 14 out of 20 colleges listed within the core area were surveyed. The structure of these conversations focused around:
 1. Current approach/understanding to SMSC provision
 2. SMSC within the FE College curriculum and learning
 3. College staff responsibilities and engagement in the delivery of SMSC (operation and management)
 4. Resources used in SMSC provision
 5. Chaplaincy – current provision/College view on provision
 6. Areas for development and partnership working

Report Structure

This report is structured around three key areas:

1. What is SMSC? Statement of a common definition
2. Findings of Breathe SMSC audit activity
3. Ways Forward from September 2011

SMSC – A Definition

Defining SMSC and what constitutes the broad agenda of subjects and activities which could be argued to form the SMSC agenda are often the subject of extended debate.

In seeking to provide clarity in the discussions with FE Colleges regarding SMSC, the Breathe project refers to the recently produced Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) document entitled 'Planning and delivering spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) support in the learning and skills sector'.

The definition of SMSC embraced by the Breathe project is the same as that summarised in the above LSIS report and the relevant section is reproduced here for clarity by kind permission of LSIS.

What is SMSC development?

In the Education Act 1988, the second aim of the National Curriculum was that 'The school curriculum should aim to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.' A similar statutory obligation is not appropriate for the learning and skills sector and this guidance does not advocate any such arrangement. However, at a time when providers in the compulsory and post compulsory phases are drawing closer together, greater commonality between the sectors, in vision and language, is justifiable and timely.

Spiritual development

Definitions of spiritual development have proved difficult, and often controversial, since they must be acceptable to both religious and non-religious people. They range from the process of acquiring personal beliefs and values and the behaviours that result, to definitions that include emotional aspects of being human, such as feelings and emotions. There is agreement that spiritual development relates to the development of the inner life, and the attribution of meaning to experience. For some, this task may involve drawing upon religious ideas and traditions; for others it may involve drawing upon the humanist tradition. It can include:

- discussing and reflecting on key questions of meaning and truth
- reflecting on important concepts, experiences and beliefs that are at the heart of religious and non-religious worldviews
- developing personal views on such issues
- valuing relationships and developing a sense of belonging
- developing the imagination
- developing curiosity about life
- appreciating a sense of wonder at the universe and world in which we live
- developing an understanding of feelings and emotions which gives cause to reflect and to learn

Moral development

Moral development means exploring, understanding and recognising shared values, as well as developing the ethical frameworks that underpin these values.

This will involve:

- consideration of what is of value, including issues of right and wrong
- developing an understanding of ideas, such as justice, honesty and truth
- reflecting on the sources of moral thinking (religious or non-religious)
- exploring the influence of family, friends, and the media on moral choices
- developing the ability to apply insights to significant social, moral and political issues affecting individuals and communities

At times this will require acknowledging and working through challenging differences, as well as shared values, in the moral stances derived from different religious and non-religious views of the world.

Social development

Social development involves learners having a political and socio-economic context which enables them to work effectively together and participate successfully in the community as a whole. The community is an environment that encourages the development of the skills and personal qualities necessary for living and working together and functioning in a diverse society. It also covers growth in knowledge and understanding of society, including religious and non-religious beliefs and how social and political institutions function and evolve. Social development covers the development of the inter-personal skills necessary for successful relationships – the quality of personal relationships can define the kind of people we are and, ultimately, the kind of world we live in.

Our capacity to participate effectively in social life is crucial to our well-being and that of the communities we belong to. Some of the areas that are covered include:

- understanding the importance of core values and social ideals, including democracy, human rights, the rule of law, social justice, political and legal equality, tolerance, and a commitment to dialogue and understanding valuing diversity and equality in society, including age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, religious or non-religious beliefs, sexual orientation and other characteristics*
- considering the importance of rights and responsibilities and developing a sense of social and civic conscience*
- developing an awareness of environmental issues and the importance of climate change*
- reflecting on the role and value of leadership, participation and volunteering (environmental or local history projects, clubs and visits, community action, student council)*
- encountering challenging and unfamiliar contexts, such as residential and community based work, work-related learning and working with professionals and experts*

Cultural development

Cultural development generally refers to developing an understanding of one's own culture and of other cultures locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, and an understanding that cultures are not static. It also means learning to feel comfortable in a variety of cultures and being able to operate in the emerging world culture provided by television, travel and the internet.

Promoting learners' cultural development is linked with encouraging learners to value cultural diversity through, for instance, preventing racism and other oppressive behaviour, such as homophobia. Cultural development must go beyond learning the norms and skills of a group of people; it also involves understanding the processes of cultural development and change and an appreciation of the inter-dependence of different cultures. It will include:

- enabling learners to recognise, explore and understand their own cultural assumptions and values, including religious and nonreligious ones*
- enabling learners to understand cultural diversity by bringing them into contact with attitudes, values and traditions of other cultures, including religious and non-religious ones*
- encouraging an historical perspective by relating contemporary values to the processes and events that have shaped them*
- enabling learners to understand the evolutionary nature of culture and the processes and potential for change*
- understanding the importance of the arts and creativity in human life and the heights of human achievement reflecting on the role of performance for building self-confidence and identity through, for instance, dance and drama, choirs, orchestras, public speaking, and sports*

Benefits and outcomes for learners

There are numerous benefits and outcomes to learners from SMSC development.

Spiritual development can give learners a strong sense of personal ownership of their thoughts and actions. They can develop a carefully considered understanding of the world in which they live, of the choices that are available to them, their own attitudes towards the opinions and actions of others and how they wish to conduct their own lives. This can build high levels of self-worth.

Moral development can give learners a sense of right and wrong, of the impact their actions will have upon themselves and others, and the ability to stand by their decisions in the face of criticism, ridicule or opposition, or to change them in changing contexts. This can build high levels of self-confidence and determination.

Social development can give learners an understanding of their roles as members of an interactive and complex society and the ability to build and maintain sound relationships. It prompts and enables learners to work with others to take action on issues of concern and make a difference in their local and wider communities. This can build a strong sense of responsibility.

Cultural development can give learners an understanding and appreciation of traditions and values, the ability to participate in group activities and enjoy leisure pursuits. This can build a strong sense of belonging.

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A full copy of the report can be accessed at:

<http://www.lsis.org.uk/Documents/Publications/SMSC%20Web.pdf>

Findings of SMSC audit

FE Colleges' current approach to / understanding of SMSC provision
Ways forward from September 2011

FE Colleges' current approach/understanding to SMSC provision

The level of understanding of SMSC varied considerably across the FE Colleges spoken to as part of this audit research.

The term SMSC itself was not generally well known by those FE staff spoken to; however as the component parts were broken down respondents were better able to articulate their respective Colleges' understanding and approach to SMSC.

When explaining further their approach/understanding of SMSC provision, respondents commonly referred to their enrichment programme or their equality and diversity activity. When activity in these areas was discussed further, it became clear that enrichment delivery activity focused upon one main element of SMSC (Social) and equality activity was seen as addressing the Spiritual/Cultural aspect. These findings are explored in further detail below.

In discussing respondents' approaches to the Social aspect of SMSC (definition as outlined earlier), it became clear that respondents saw that their enrichment programmes and activity supporting the development of softer/social skills as forming the majority of their input in this area. Some colleges had a separate enrichment programme, where as others ran regular tutorials and delivered activity through these sessions – further detail below.

When discussing Spiritual/Cultural aspects of SMSC (and to a very limited degree the moral aspect) respondents often referred to their equalities activities and policies they had in place to protect learners' rights to hold particular religious views. As respondents explained their activity delivered around this subject area, it was clear that in the vast majority of cases this activity was chiefly about ensuring learners were aware of the policies and the need to adhere to them. A small number of respondents highlighted cultural awareness and diversity weeks, where they would encourage and support students from different backgrounds to celebrate and share their cultures. The main theme of such activity appeared focused upon raising learners' awareness that there are a range of faiths and beliefs out there in the world, rather than any further engagement in what belief in these faiths meant or any other spiritual/religious matters.

None of the respondents identified activity where they promoted awareness of other faiths and beliefs and what it meant to be a follower of these and how this impacted upon how a person lived their life. When pushed a little further, some respondents were willing to admit that the issue of faith within the FE College environment was a very sensitive one. There appeared to be a certain level of avoiding the matter directly for fear of causing offence or being accused of favouring/promoting one faith/belief system over another.

Summary:

- **SMSC as a whole is not fully understood.**
- **Social aspect is seen as been linked to development of softer skill development (i.e. confidence building, communication skills)**
- **Spiritual/Cultural aspect seen as:**
 - **being delivered through promotion and awareness/enforcement of equality policies**
 - **More about awareness that other people come from different cultural/religious backgrounds, rather than what this means.**
- **Activity regarding the Moral aspect appeared very limited.**
- **Some reluctance to explore spiritual issues further for fear of causing offence or accusation of proliferation.**

SMSC within the curriculum and learning

After establishing respondents' understanding of the main aspects of SMSC, the practical delivery of SMSC activity within the curriculum and learning activity was explored.

The majority of respondents immediately referred to their enrichment and tutorial programmes and discussions focused around these and how they were delivered within particular Colleges.

The majority of respondents outlined the delivery of tutorial activities, delivered by mainstream teaching staff as being an area which delivered or could be used to deliver further SMSC activity. Tutorial activity was described by respondents as being a compulsory activity for learners. A number of respondents highlighted a need for resources to "enliven" delivery of tutorial activity and equip staff to deliver more interesting and innovative tutorial sessions. One respondent stated that they had purchased an on-line tutorial package which provided information and resources that their tutorial staff were using.

Enrichment activities were another area respondents referred to when discussing SMSC activity and in the majority of cases respondents identified such activity as being non-compulsory. A number of colleges highlighted physical and competitive sporting activities as being a key feature of such activity. However an increasing number of respondents were actively encouraging learners to form clubs and other interest groups and spoke of the value of creating a positive atmosphere and opportunities for social interaction amongst their learners. One respondent in particular had a comprehensive enrichment programme covering the usual sporting activities as well as public speaking and cooking courses to name a few.

On the whole, Colleges see tutorial time/activities as being compulsory and enrichment time/activities as being optional. Some respondents talked about actively developing a heavier emphasis on enrichment activity, with one College looking to embed enrichment activity so that it became part of the core College timetable.

Many respondents stated that as part of their Colleges' engagement with learners across the curriculum, they addressed ECM (Every Child/Learner Matters) and all promoted to varying degrees healthy living, Health and safety etc... This activity was referred to by some Colleges as delivering elements of the SMSC agenda. Some interviewees said that delivery of this activity was embedded in the curriculum, could be seen in lesson plans and was evident in every teaching session delivered. On occasion, workshops and information sessions on specific areas of health or safety would be held. Several respondents referred to sexual health awareness workshops in this respect, although it was unclear from the conversations whether these sessions touched upon questions of respect for others, healthy relationships, self-respect and the like.

Summary:

- **Tutorial and enrichment time seen by Colleges as being the main avenues through which they deliver SMSC activities.**
- **Tutorial time compulsory vs. enrichment time optional.**
- **Tutorial activity normally delivered by mainstream teaching staff with tutor group responsibilities.**
- **Enrichment activity seen as additional to main curriculum and delivered by dedicated staff.**
- **ECM/safeguarding/H&S have a high profile.**

Staff responsibilities and engagement in the delivery of SMSC (operation and management)

In contacting FE Colleges to discuss SMSC delivery, the main point of contact was normally Heads of Student/learner services. None of the Colleges spoken to identify a member of staff whom they considered as taking a lead in the delivery and management of SMSC activity, however colleges were able to swiftly identify staff with tutorial and enrichment programme management responsibilities.

Whilst some respondents identified staff who were responsible for developing resources and ensuring activities were delivered, a number of interviewees did highlight that they were unclear as to the levels of commitment and engagement by main stream teaching staff on the delivery of activities. They felt that access to materials and suitable training opportunities could help increase the capacity (and willingness) of staff to engage more effectively in delivery.

Summary:

- **Responsibility for SMSC appears fall within the remit of Student/ Learner services.**
- **SMSC is seen as being part of and tutorial/enrichment programmes**
- **Delivery of SMSC activity affected by staff capacity to deliver and access to resources.**

Resources used in SMSC provision

None of the respondents identified any SMSC resources they were aware of. One respondent talked about an online tutorial package they used which provides tutorial delivery staff with access to teaching materials, but they were unable to provide any feedback on the effectiveness of the materials available.

When discussing SMSC resources that were available, and with which the author is familiar (such as Breathe, the AFAN website (www.afan.uk/net) and material produced by Damaris), all respondents were keen to explore these further and hear more about them. These discussions lead to respondents being keen to see tutorial programme material developed specifically around SMSC themes that could be delivered in a 60 minute tutorial lesson by generic teaching staff. Most respondents were also very interested in the use of on-line resources and reported ready access to SMART boards in classrooms and internet access for students.

When discussing delivery of Breathe sessions in particular, respondents could more readily see such sessions working as part of a faith week or other 'special

one off activities'. They did state that programming a Breathe session into the College day and making the space available could prove to be problematic, but they were keen to hear about how Breathe could be broken into a programme of individual tutorial sessions.

Summary:

- **No SMSC resources were identified by respondents.**
- **Colleges keen to access resources for SMSC delivery – especially online.**
- **Breathe main kit sessions seen as being good for one off events.**
- **Keen to discuss seeing Breathe as part of an extended tutorial programme.**

Multi-faith Chaplaincy

All but two interviewees expressed some hesitation over the development of multi-faith chaplaincy. Colleges often responded that they could not see a role for a “vicar” engaging with the College. It was clear from this information and individual College experiences discussed in more detail that most College staff spoken to had a limited understanding of multi-faith Chaplaincy and what such a service would look like.

Two of the Colleges which had specific resources dedicated for a multi-faith Chaplaincy provision were at pains to emphasise that the service was inclusive and actively promoted to those of all faiths and none.

The Colleges were able to clearly evidence how this was done. The involvement of students in issues such as human rights, Fair trade, and charity fund raising for disaster relief or local projects appeared common themes. However events celebrating the aspects of faiths represented within the student body (especially around food, music, dance and art) also appeared to be very well received by students of all faiths and none.

Resources for multi-faith Chaplaincy were a key topic of discussion for respondents, who were keen to understand how Colleges funded this activity and were able to provide these services. For those already delivering multi-faith Chaplaincy services, these were closely linked to learner/student service teams.

Summary:

- **Limited understanding of the role and concept of multi-faith Chaplaincy.**
- **Multi-faith Chaplaincy activities are inclusive and not just about faith issues.**
- **Concern over availability of resources to support multi-faith Chaplaincy.**

Partnership working

Respondents reported that they would be keen to develop links with faith communities in their catchment area and that they were keen to ensure these links reflected the make-up of their student body. However most also reported that they did not know how they would go about contacting such faith communities and how they could then effectively engage them within College activities.

A number of respondents also stated that the Christian faith community appeared to be proactive at seeking engagement with them - some cited examples such as this project and other approaches they had experienced either directly or supported by Christian members of their staff. Some respondents appeared uncomfortable about this and expressed concerns about being seen to promote one faith over another and admitted that they hadn't followed up on such engagement opportunities as a result. They also expressed concerns about those who seeking to engage in order to proselytise.

Summary:

- **Colleges keen to engage with faith communities, but don't how to.**
- **Respondents felt that the Christian faith was the dominant faith that was seeking to engage with them.**
- **Interviewees expressed reluctance to engage with faith communities or faith issues as a whole for fear of issues of proselytism and accusations of favouring various one faith over another.**

Going Forward from September 2011

For the partner organisations in the West Midlands Breathe project, the conclusions of this audit have helped to identify a number of discrete areas for further project work to help serve the colleges in this region, to be taken forward by the WM Breathe Worker in partnership with others.

- Regarding the Breathe resource itself, there was widespread interest amongst College staff, but also some logistical factors which have clearly prompted colleges to hesitate in actually booking a full Breathe day (for example, the time commitment or size of room required to house the full-scale Breathe installation). Given that the main barriers to the greater uptake of Breathe are practical rather than principled, the Dare2Engage core group has agreed that the next phase of the work being undertaken by Andy Haynes should focus upon developing Breathe events and other tutorial/enrichment material in forms more suitable to current patterns of tutorial entitlement and college life.
- It has been noted that in many cases, it is the Christian churches who have been most proactive in seeking partnership with FE Colleges, and that whilst in many cases this has been much valued, College staff also sometimes reported feeling hesitant about such partnerships, either through fear of proselytising activity or through fear of being seen to favour one faith group over another. As an organisation with roots in a variety of Christian denominations, West Midlands Churches' FE Council is well-placed to seek to educate local churches about the needs and priorities of FE Colleges, to help them understand how Colleges might perceive such offers of help, and to enable constructive, mutually-fulfilling partnerships to be brokered. A toolkit for embarking on such partnerships already exists.* West Midlands Churches' FE Council has further committed to run a series of briefing events for churches in 2012 and would welcome input from College managers in these.
- This audit has also suggested that there remains a hazy understanding of the 'Spiritual' dimension to SMSC within many Colleges, and associated uncertainty concerning the nature of 'religion' and 'belief' and the roles these may or may not play in College life. In response to a direct request from one College for faith literacy training, West Midlands Churches' FE Council has undertaken to develop training opportunities for Colleges in increasing faith literacy.

*Effective Partnership Working: Learning the Lessons (NEAFE/RAWM/St Peter's Saltley Trust, 2007)

Appendix: The Breathe Project Steering Group

During 2010-11 the West Midlands Breathe project steering group consisted of:

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|-----------------------|---|
| John Breadon | Outgoing National Churches' Adviser in Further Education, Vice-Chair of the West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council |
| Toni Coulton | Director of Festive (FE and Sixth Form Initiative), member of the Core Group of Dare2Engage, member of the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education and of the West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council |
| Ian Jones | Director of St Peter's Saltley Trust, Hon Sec of the West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council |
| Linda Pegler | Central England Quaker representative on the West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council, formerly manager of the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project |
| Rachel Warwick | Director of Dare2Engage |

Early in 2010 the West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council (WMC FEC) and Dare2Engage (D2E) began a joint project in the West Midlands region to encourage the delivery of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) provision in the colleges of this area, by offering appropriate support at a management, staff and student level. This project was timed to coincide with the publication of the non-statutory guidance on delivering SMSC support in the learning and skills sector, developed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS).

As part of the project, project officer Andy Haynes was asked to produce a report on what already existed in colleges in terms of the provision of, and plans for, SMSC development. This report, based on structured conversations with fourteen Colleges in the region, offers a useful snapshot of Further Education and SMSC provision in 2010/11, as an aid to further development in that area.