

Faith Communities

The Hidden Contribution?



*“a great deal of
very high quality
work”*

Faith Communities - The Hidden Contribution?



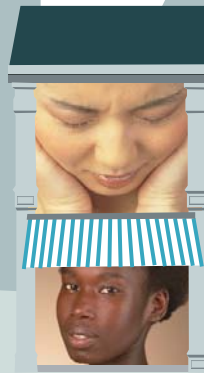
In September 2009, the South East England Faiths Forum (SEEFF) commissioned WME (West Midlands Enterprise) to assess the Economic Impact of Faith Groups in the South East Region. This was done because we were confident that there was a great deal of very high quality work being undertaken in the region by the Faith Communities, but were also aware that no attempt had ever been made to measure it in South East England.

We also wanted to make sure that this was a piece of work which would demand to be taken seriously by both existing and, perhaps more importantly, future partners. So the report was commissioned from an economic research organisation and funded by the Regional Development Agency rather than from a group that has any sort of faith connections.

This has also ensured that the research is sound in statistical terms. If you want to check out the details, you will find the original report at <http://www.se-faithforum.net>.

It will show you that:

- The Research was mainly carried out by telephone interview.
- The sample size is big enough for the results to be considered statistically sound.
- The industry's norms have been observed when extrapolating the information gathered to formulate estimates for what goes on across the region.





bereavement loneliness

*“a huge ‘social capital’
often overlooked in
economic terms”*

The document therefore gives results that are provable and can be substantiated. At the same time, we strongly believe they are conservative. But we anticipate that this should help achieve two things:

- To give the Faith Communities more confidence in themselves and their ability to make a difference.
- To show others – existing and potential partners – just what the Faith Communities are capable of.

While the report and the ‘implications and recommendations’ section at the end of this short summary do not directly address central government, the change of government in May 2010 and the emphasis on ‘Big Society’ and localism does link the two.

It is generally accepted that around 70% of social care and community volunteers are motivated by their faith. Faith communities have a long history of such engagement ~ humane prisons, probation services, social care, high quality nursing and schools for everyone have their origins in social engagement by churches. This continues today across the faiths.

This commitment, motivation and presence in every community brings a huge ‘social capital’ often overlooked in economic terms. There are recognised faith infrastructure organisations well placed to develop the emphasis of ‘Big Society’ and localism. SEEFF exists as a way in to that capacity outlined in this report.

So please read on and be both challenged and encouraged by what you read.

Revd Canon Chris Rich
Chairperson, South East England Faiths Forum

homelessness



nursing

violence

*faith groups' annual contribution
to the S.E.'s economy is about
£328,000,000*

Faiths' Economic Impact

All organisations, sacred and secular, are part of the economy. All contribute to and receive from the economy in different proportions. To ignore the contribution of the Faith Communities is to miss a very major contribution.

The mainstream economy tends to measure everything in financial terms. This is not something that is easily done by faith organisations, and some may resist doing so. Measurement is reasonably straightforward for direct wealth creating and profit making organisations but for non-profit and community organisations that don't contribute directly to wealth creation it is not so easy. However, they are part of the economy and so accrediting them with a 'financial value' is possible.

The recent study has attempted to do this. With other similar studies in other parts of the country it affirms that Faith organisations make a very significant contribution in the economy - national, regional and local.

In summary, the Economic Impact of Faith in the South East (2009 - 2010) highlights the following:

Faith Organisations participate in various sectors of the economy often alongside other partners: heritage, tourism and leisure, public services, as well as direct consumers.

Faith organisations' annual contribution to the South East's economy is about £328 million.





the true impact of the faith sector - a vast contribution

jobs

PLACES The value of the south east region's faith organisation's premises, extensively used by other sectors of the community, is about £1.2 million per year. However, faith organisations tend to offer them either free of charge or on a subsidised basis.

Places of worship, especially the larger ones, attract about 750,000 tourist visits every year, bringing about £25 million into the region and spending on catering and souvenirs etc. about £1.25 million.

EMPLOYMENT Faith communities in the south east employ over 10,000 paid jobs. Of these, more than half are community focused, while the remainder are linked to places of worship that promote community involvement. Faith organisations also deliver a range of service on behalf of the public sector valued at £13 million per year and generating 400 full-time equivalent jobs.

VOLUNTEERS About 200,000 people work unpaid with and for the region's faith organisations and their time is worth about £95 million per year.

SERVICES OFFERED Many faith organisations work with people and groups beyond their own faith sector: young people, older people and people with health and social problems. The annual value of working with people in some specific areas of work is reckoned as: Homelessness - £40 million; Helping into employment - £10 million; Preventing crime - £4.5 million; Preventing education drop-out - £12 million.

CONSUMERS The region's faith organisations spend £123 million a year on other wages, stationery, building maintenance etc. They also spend about £3.1 million per year on one-off events and conferences.

A number of implications arise from the Economic Impact Report for Faith organisations but also for other Voluntary and Community Organisations, Local Authorities, Strategic Partnerships and the Regional Faith Forum. This is summarised in the next pages.

venues

tourism

health

local economy

crime



*“information will improve
recognition and
acceptance”*

Implications and Recommendations

(Some apply to more than one section)

FAITH ORGANISATIONS

1. More good information is needed about all the Faith Organisations in the SE Region: what, where and who they are and what they do.
 - a. Faith Groups to engage with SEEFF to capture this information.
 - b. Keep the information up to date.
2. The (economic and other) value, profile, recognition and work of Faith Groups needs to be improved among local authorities and partners.
3. Faith Groups could use this Economic Impact research and report to help raise their own profile.
4. Need to overcome the prejudices about what Faith Groups are and do.
5. More case studies are needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of faith groups and the impact they have.
6. The value of economic and social impact could help support funding applications.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES and LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

1. The (economic and other) value profile, recognition and work of Faith Groups needs to be improved among local authorities and partners.
2. Need to recognise the high professional standard of the work of Faith Groups.
3. Need to no longer treat Faith Groups as low-cost alternative.
4. Need to overcome the prejudices about what Faith Groups are and do.

VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY and OTHER (SECULAR) ORGANISATIONS

1. The reluctance to engage with Faith Organisations needs to be overcome by emphasising their diversity and the quality of their contribution.
2. This could be encouraged by knowing more about the Faith Groups in the Region, and this could be helped through a more substantial database (see above)





anxiety age

race

SEEFF's deeper engagement with the activities of faith groups would bring benefits

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND FAITHS FORUM (SEEFF)

1. More good information is needed about all the Faith Organisations in the SE Region: what, where and who they are and what they do.
 - a. SEEFF to engage with Faith Groups in this.
 - b. Keep the information up to date.
 - c. Develop an on-line community website for which Faith Groups can register.
 - This would: i. Facilitate the services and support SEEFF offers (e.g. identifying funding, grants etc.)
 - ii. Encourage more Faith Groups to become 'members'.
2. SEEFF could engage with the current research of the Local Government Association (LGA) into how regional and sub-regional networks can engage with local authorities and strategic partnerships.
 - a. SEEFF would need resources (funding) for this.
 - b. This engagement could help Faith Groups to link with local social issues.
3. Faith Groups could use this Economic Impact research and report to help raise their own profile.
4. SEEFF needs to work out how it can support faith groups (this could be material for a SEEFF conference)
 - a. By helping to raise the profile of the faith sector, by developing the potential of the sector.
 - b. By increasing their awareness of commissioning processes;
 - c. By encouraging faith groups to network and co-operate with each other and with others; and to compete for contracts.

engagement with social issues





Visit our Website: www.se-faithforum.net

To join our mailing list and keep up-to-date with news, funding opportunities and events in the South East, please email us at:

contact@se-faithforum.net