

NASACRE AGM and conference 18th, May 2017

This was the first time I had attended the NASACRE AGM and conference which this year was held in York. I attended along with representatives from SACREs across the country.

The keynote speaker was Professor Joyce Miller, Commissioner of the RE Council and one of the people recently appointed to review the legal, education and policy frameworks for RE. The Commission is in place for 2 years and is made up of 14 people. The question was asked about how independent the Commission can be and Joyce Miller felt it included a fair representation of people from across the “RE World”. The Commission has been set up to discuss the big questions of RE. These include, in part, the quality of teaching, the legal context for RE, the role of the syllabus and the question of a National Syllabus. Teacher training and the need for CPD were also highlighted as core issues and were later discussed in regional table groups. An interim report from the Commission will be developed for the autumn with the final report published in 2018.

Professor Miller traced developments from the time of the 1988 Education Act where, enshrined in law, based on good practice, was the introduction of LA Agreed Syllabuses. This was followed by ‘the Model Syllabus for RE’, 1994, reflecting ‘Faith Communities’, what should be taught and raised the big question of who owns RE?

Her presentation was interesting and provocative and moved on to consider the way in which RE exists within a world where technology is developing at a rapid rate.

SACRE members might also be interested to consider the points Joyce Miller provided for discussion: These are just a few of the points she shared.

- How can SACRE challenge stereotypes and RE become more inclusive in schools?
- How autonomous is RE and what are the links we should explore with other subjects?
- Who “owns” RE in the modern world?
- How do we generate the local energy necessary to pursue excellence in RE?
- What is the future for RE teacher training? (Currently 3 hours across the whole course?)
- What scope is there for collaborative working across SACREs?
- Can RE play a greater part in developing community cohesion?
- How does each SACRE cope with the autonomy of academies?
- Is each SACRE representative of its community e.g. academies, parents?

Paul Harpin
June 2017