

Date of issue: Tuesday , 15 June 2021

MEETING	STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DATE AND TIME:	THURSDAY, 17TH JUNE, 2021 AT 4.30 PM
VENUE:	VIRTUAL MEETING
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NADIA WILLIAMS 07749 709 961

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS

The following Papers have been added to the agenda for the above meeting:-

* Items 4 and 5 were not available for publication with the rest of the agenda.

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
4.	Review of the Terms of Reference and Membership of SACRE and making recommendations to Council	1 - 4
5.	Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub Update	5 - 18

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education **DATE:** 17 June 2021

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PART I

FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

1 **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to review the SACRE Terms of Reference and to make recommendations of its proposed changes as set out in this report to Council.

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The SACRE is requested to consider the report and agree the proposed changes that it seeks to make to the Terms of Reference, and to recommend their endorsement by the Member Panel on the Constitution before being reported for approval by Council.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Good governance arrangements will have positive implications for the SJWS and the JSNA.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Good governance arrangements will enhance all the outcomes of the Five Year Plan.

4 **Other Implications**

- (a) **Financial** - There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- (b) **Legal** – The changes to the terms of reference are in the right direction. The changes will encompass the Council’s legal obligations. The relevant legal framework is this:

- 1) Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED), ss. 149 and 153 Equality Act 2010 obliges public bodies to have due regard to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2) Additional obligations under Part 3 of the *Equality Act 2010 (EqA 2010)*, including where the services, goods or facilities are provided in the exercise of a public function and this duty is anticipatory.

5 **Supporting Information**

Background

- 5.1 The SACRE appointed a Humanist representative as a co-opted member at its meeting on 4 November 2020. Co-opted members could participate fully in the discussions of the SACRE but could not vote. Members express a desire for the Humanist representative to be afforded full membership and enable voting rights but acknowledged that there was currently no category in which such a membership could be place to enable this to happen.
- 5.2 At its meeting on 3 March 2021, SACRE discussed the consideration of enabling the Humanist representative to be appointed to full voting membership. With advice from the Professional Adviser, the SACRE considered that Committee 1 (Christian Denominations and Other Faiths) could be broadened to include 'beliefs', which would allow for the inclusion of the Humanist representation. Members understood that this would be in line with a number of local authorities that had Humanist representatives on their SACREs with full voting membership.

The Position

- 5.3 The position is that local authorities decide which bodies are represented in each SACRE groups and the SACRE therefore recommended the Committee 1 (Category A) – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths to be widened to include Full membership of Humanist representation.

5.3 **Terms of reference**

- 5.3.1 There have been no legislative changes that have required Slough SACRE Constitution to be amended or updated. However Circular 1/94, Religious Education and Collective Worship issued in 1994 has since been replaced by Religious Education in English Schools: Non-statutory Guidance 2010, which replaced the elements of Circular 1/94 relating to RE. The proposed revision of Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths, to include 'beliefs' and membership of Humanism is attached at Appendix 1.

6 **Conclusion**

Members are requested to consider the information in appendix 1 and consider the current SACRE membership of Committee 1 - Christian Denominations and Other

Faiths with a view to including 'beliefs' and Humanist the current named unions with six teachers and teachers' representatives from any union in primary and secondary (including special schools) schools in Slough.

7 **Background Papers**

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 and 3 March 2021.
2. Religious Education in English Schools: Non-statutory Guidance 2010.

8 **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Current Slough SACRE Constitution

Appendix 2 - Slough SACRE Constitution and revised Committee 1 and inclusion of Humanist membership.

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**SACRE HUB MINUTES 7 JUNE 2021 4.15PM ON ZOOM**

Present: Karen Butler, Beth Rowland, Sue Elbrow, Angela Hill, Anne Andrews, Mark Laynesmith, David Taylor

1. **Feedback from film launch and NASACRE conference.** Any feedback from use of the films.
 - a. Conference launch had been generally well-received, but as yet there was no real feedback from anybody on how or if the films were being used. The NASACRE presentation elicited a good response from those who attended and seemed to be well received.
 - b. Booking list sent to all hub members so that they can see who attended from their LA. Films to be further advertised at RE Network meetings and in SACRE newsletters where possible.
2. **Filming at Catholic Church on 10 June**- we still need a SACRE member to attend.
 - a. No Hub members are available, but Barbara Meaney has arranged cover for her class and so will be able to be present all afternoon. Barbara has been involved in most of the filming events and has written the KS3 notes, run the KS3 workshop at the launch and so is well placed to make this session work.
3. **Bid to Reading faith Forum and suggestions** – I have been sent loads of photos and PowerPoints. What do we want to do with them?
 - a. ML explained the genesis of the narrated PowerPoints that the former chair of Reading Faith Forum (Nigel Hardcastle) is keen for us to incorporate. The materials are somewhat dated but might still be of use to KS1/2 but not for inclusion along with the films. The proposal was made to keep the two items separate.
 - b. The decision was taken to bid for £2500 to make 5 additional films – Orthodox Christian, Orthodox Judaism, Sunni Muslim, a free church and a humanist (all in Reading). This would give £200 per film to pay for writing the notes.
 - c. AA to contact Jerry Curd (filmmaker) to establish his willingness to continue with the project – **Update he has said yes!**
 - d. ML will draft the bid sometime in w/c 14/06
 - e. A separate bid of about £200 will be submitted to see if we can evaluate and host the PowerPoints somewhere. Perhaps on the blog spot.
4. **Hub funding and future syllabus review** - in the light of the Ofsted RE review report (Appendix A) do we want to begin to plan for the syllabus review?
 - a. The decision was taken to begin planning for the syllabus review, as the report sets out some helpful pointers as to what good RE might look like.
 - b. The advisers will include some informal conversations about the syllabus at the summer network meetings.
 - c. The three advisers will meet to draw up some questions for a more formal survey to take place early in the autumn term.

- d. A survey will be sent out early in the autumn term – possible on Google forms or maybe on Survey Monkey.
- e. Invoices have been drawn up for £500 per SACRE to cover this year; If we begin to make progress on syllabus review, more may be needed. The chair/adviser to each SACRE will be emailed the invoice to forward to the correct person.
- f. Please ensure that SACRE/LA is aware that additional funding for SACREs will be required for 22-23 to cover the cost of the syllabus review.
- g. Leading of the syllabus review will be shared by the three advisers, who will meet later this term to draw up a timeline (with cost implications).

5. AOB (please notify in advance if possible)

- a. Stephen to take resources platform idea to the hub meeting for discussion. Is it about putting resources onto a central platform, accessible to all teachers? Any further details would be really helpful.
 - i. As Stephen was unfortunately not able to attend this meeting, the discussion was brief. We reminded people that the Blogspot already exists, and ML has been keeping it up to date.
 - ii. This information should be shared at the RE Network meetings too, but further discussion is needed about who has editorial oversight and the time commitment required.
- b. Stephen and Angela to suggest to Hub idea of a list for schools to 'visit' via' online places of worship (Stephen / Angela) – this seems self-explanatory, but where will the ideas for the online places of worship be collated from? Would teachers suggest them to us?
 - i. There are several online visits available through many of the usual teacher frequented websites: BBC, True Tube, RE Online etc.
 - ii. RBWM are trialling a project that is a collaboration between a school and a place of worship. Perhaps this can be a model going forward, that a school engages a local place of worship to make a targeted recorded visit which could then be shared on the blog spot.
- c. NASACRE funding report
 - i. SACREs should ask their LA to share with SACRE the information that was given to NASACRE in response to the FOI. It is important that this information is gathered.
 - ii. Anne A has been elected to a post on the NASACRE exec, so will hopefully be able to keep Berkshire SACREs in the loop.

The meeting finished at 5.30pm

WHAT DOES THE OFSTED REPORT MEAN FOR SACRE?

Part 1:

A very brief summary

The Ofsted report into the teaching of RE (12 May 2021) sets out some of the expectations and principles behind what makes good RE. It tackles some of the questions that SACREs have been asking for a while, about the numbers of schools that are not complying fully with the law, either in terms of time or quality of provision. There is evidence that early entry GCSE disadvantages all pupils, but in particular the already disadvantaged. It also raises issues about teacher training and subject knowledge, acknowledging that in some contexts there are insufficient subject specialists and that good RE teaching is complex and needs proper CPD and support.

The central part of the document focuses on the CURRICULUM as it is following Ofsted's focus on the curriculum as being the main driver in delivering a quality education. It addresses different types of knowledge, identifying three.

They are:

- first, 'substantive' knowledge: knowledge about various religious and non-religious traditions.
- second, 'ways of knowing': pupils learn 'how to know' about religion and non-religion and
- third, 'personal knowledge': pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and non-religious traditions they study.

The expectation is that the curriculum will enable pupils to progress (know more and be able to do more) in these three domains. Progression in the first two domains would provide the bedrock of knowledge for assessment. Thus the early stages of the RE curriculum need to prepare pupils for learning at the later stages. This requires coherent, carefully sequenced RE, that has clear end goals. It needs to avoid oversimplifying and ensure that what is presented is accurate, diverse, and scholarly. The review recognises that the possible choices of curriculum content are far wider than could ever be taught, but that the selection of material needs to consider how it prepares pupils for life in a multi-religious and multi-secular world, taking in the local and the global context. Clearly accurate does not have to equal complex, and while it may be necessary to generalise, qualifying statements with some, many, most and adding a suggestion of locality and place (e.g. most western Christians) points to the big picture of religion and non-religion. RE should not avoid the "morally displeasing" elements of religion but must sequence carefully to ensure that pupils

are ready for the new knowledge. Equally, particular faiths should not only be taught in relation to negative ideas such as persecution or terrorism.

The key phrases are that the curriculum must be “collectively enough” and offer a “cumulative sufficiency”. Ambitious end goals should direct the learning, enabling teachers to choose suitable content and methodology appropriate to that content. The curriculum should be viewed as the progression model, in terms of structure and substance – this has implications for teachers, ensuring that they know what has been taught previously and continue to assess that prior knowledge.

Many of the curriculum and assessment messages are really about what good teaching and learning look like, no matter what subject is being addressed, while recognising that in RE the selection of content matter, and knowledge about the ways of learning need to be made specific.

Part 2:

What does this mean for SACREs?

There are two clear areas where this report impacts on the work of SACRE.

1. Design of the Locally Agreed Syllabus
2. Provision of CPD for teachers

It may also have an impact on our monitoring and evaluation of RE, and the advice offered to schools in terms of their curriculum provision.

1. Design of the Locally Agreed Syllabus

SACREs would be wise to consider carefully the guidance that this review offers as to what a well planned RE curriculum should contain. The review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus should ensure that a framework is provided for teachers that enables them to create curriculum for their schools that reflect the recommendations.

SACRE will need to consider:

- a) How far it specifies content and how that will be sequenced so that the curriculum is the progression model.
- b) The balance between breadth and depth to create that “cumulative sufficiency”, ensuring that over time pupils cover Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions in depth.
- c) How the “ways of knowing” of knowing will be defined and which tools will be recommended.
- d) The links that will be drawn out to create the coherence.
- e) The assessment model recommended (if at all).
- f) The “ambitious end goals” rather than age-related expectations.

- g) How to avoid both the oversimplification of the thematic and the silo effect of separate religions.
- h) How to create a balance between the local and global aspects of lived religion.
- i) How to create precise questions that do not lead to over simplified generalisations.

2. Provision of CPD for teachers

This review makes it clear that it is what happens in the classroom that matters, and that without sufficient subject knowledge and subject specific teaching skills a good syllabus may not be turned into good learning for pupils.

SACRE will need to consider:

- a) How far current CPD provision is adequate.
- b) What specific training will be required on the introduction of a new syllabus.
- c) Whether there is sufficient funding and time allocated to RE CPD in the LA.
- d) Whether to identify current good practitioners and encourage them to work with other schools.
- e) Whether there are cost effective ways of offering teacher CPD.
- f) How to encourage practitioners and schools to participate in CPD.

Monitoring and evaluation of RE in schools will need to have an eye to this review, particularly in regard to the time allocation for RE and the quality of curriculum. Schools where Ofsted could do a deep dive (i.e. VC, academies and maintained schools) will need to be our focus.

Anne Andrews SACRE adviser June 2021 (Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub)

SACRE funding in England



A Report from the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

May 2021



Foreword

It is my pleasure, as current Chair of the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE, to introduce this report to our members, and to thank everyone involved in its production.

Levels of funding for SACREs have been a source of some concern and interest to the Association for some time. Discussions with the Department for Education during 2019 also demonstrated that advice on the levels and sources of funding was of interest to their teams, to ministers and to Members of Parliament. In 2019 NASACRE issued this advice:

'...having looked at the statutory expectations that could reasonably be expected to be funded from CSSB¹, set out a national recommendation that an LA should allocate at least 2% of the CSSB to SACRE in order that SACRE can carry out their statutory duties.'²

SACREs are in the main made up of volunteers, supported by LA officers. Despite inadequate funding and appropriate support structures in some local areas, many SACREs have continued to meet, provide a syllabus and training to schools, and to provide advice on the interface between education and religion and worldviews. SACREs have also continued this work online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Freedom of Information request underpinning this report emerged from another NASACRE and RE Council project on piloting 'Local Area Networks for Religion and Worldviews', as proposed by the Commission on Religious Education³. The FOI request was issued to LAs during the autumn of 2020. We cannot let the publication of the report go by without thanking all who responded, and all who helped FOI officers and SACRE Clerks find the answers during the Covid 19 pandemic, and its series of partial or complete lockdowns.

NASACRE is a non-statutory organisation supported mainly by volunteer executive committee members. The research and writing team gave freely of their own time and expertise to produce this summary of findings, and to offer some advice. The Department of Education has commented positively to NASACRE on this advice⁴, acknowledging that its officials might use NASACRE's estimate of a funding level of 2% of the CSSB to advise local authorities. However, authorities can, of course, determine their own budgets and where funding comes from to support SACREs.

NASACRE is likely to repeat this FOI request on a regular basis, and the executive committee is very happy to receive feedback on the process and the questions, and other areas we might focus on. Feedback has already shown us that the FOI request in itself helped SACRE officers and members to understand the challenges and complexities of current education funding levels. This report highlights the facts as submitted through LA data, and it shows that many SACREs deserve better support from their local authorities. As statutory bodies, SACREs have a right to raise questions about their levels of support, and to receive the funding that is needed to underpin their work.

We look forward to working with Chairs of SACREs, partner RE associations, politicians, and officials at the DfE on the next steps to achieving some parity of provision in terms of the financial and other resources. These are urgently needed to enable statutory bodies to achieve their obligations, operate efficiently within local democracy, and to promote excellent Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools.

I commend the report to you all.



Linda Rudge,
Chair
The National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE

¹ The CSSB (Central Services School Block) is funding allocated by central government (through the Education and Skills Funding Agency) to local authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in both maintained schools and academies in England.

² NASACRE (2019), SACRE Briefing 22, <https://mailchi.mp/8292b1171b7d/6g3v9uvmy6-1332313?e=da7db1e3e7>

³ Commission on Religious Education(2018) *Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward* Religious Education Council of England and Wales <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf>

⁴ DfE (2019) email to NASACRE, 18th March.

Headlines

The majority of SACREs in England do not get a sufficient share of the CSSB to enable them to carry out their duties well.

Only 12 Local Authorities in 2019-2020 stated that they used 2% or more of CSSB funds on SACRE business, meaning 92% of SACREs were allocated less than 2% of the CSSB.

25 Authorities (18%) claim to use no funding on SACRE business in contravention of statutory responsibilities.

Over a quarter (27%) of Authorities told us they allocate no funds to professional support for the SACRE.

More than half of LAs (42, 53%) disclosed that they do not use any funds to support RE in schools.

Due to lack of adequate support it is increasingly difficult for some SACREs to fulfil their statutory duties; 7 LAs told us that their Agreed Syllabus was over 6 years old. One syllabus was last reviewed in 2010.

Note: All percentages are based on data from those authorities that provided an answer to that question.

Context

In the 1988 Education Reform Act, all Local (Education) Authorities (LAs) were given a statutory duty to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). In many areas they had existed prior to this date, to agree and support the local syllabus for RE. The latest guidance on RE confirms that “each LA must establish a permanent body called a standing advisory council on religious education”. The LA must also “establish an occasional body called an agreed syllabus conference (ASC) to review the agreed syllabus for RE adopted by the LA” and must “institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus within five years of the last review, and subsequently every five years after the completion of each further review”. “An LA should fund and support a SACRE and an ASC satisfactorily in line with the duty to constitute or convene each of these bodies and to enable them effectively to carry out their functions.”⁵

Local Authority funding has been reduced significantly in the last decade with, on average, a 21% real term fall between 2009 and 2019.⁶ Financially squeezed Local Authorities often appear to underfund the work of SACREs. The last Ofsted subject report into RE suggested that:

“Recent changes in education policy are having a negative impact on the provision for RE in some schools and on the capacity of local authorities and SACREs to carry out their statutory responsibilities to monitor and support it.”⁷

A survey of SACREs completed in 2017 confirmed that a major concern of many SACREs was indeed their capacity to carry out even their statutory duties due to underfunding⁸. When asked a parliamentary question about SACRE funding in March 2018, Schools Minister, Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP gave the following written answer:

The Government is continuing to provide local authorities with funding for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) through the Central School Services Block from 2018/19 onwards. Local authorities are expected to ensure that SACREs are funded adequately to perform their duties. SACREs continue to play an important role in supporting schools to teach high-quality religious education.⁹

⁵ DCSF (2010) *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance*, pages 10-11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf

⁶ Neil Amin Smith & David Phillips (2019) *English council funding: what's happened and what's next?*, IFS Briefing Note, Available from: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14133>

⁷ Ofsted (2013) *Religious education: realising the potential*, Page 6

⁸ Paul Smalley (2019): *A critical policy analysis of local religious education in England*, *British Journal of Religious Education*.

⁹ HC Deb, 26 March 2018, cW, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2018-03-21/133819>

In a letter dated 15th August 2019, Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP stated “it is important that SACREs should be resourced sufficiently to be able to fulfil their statutory functions”¹⁰. NASACRE considers that an LA would need to allocate at least 2% of the CSSB to the SACRE to enable it to carry out its statutory duties, and significantly more in the year that the Agreed Syllabus is reviewed.

The following can reasonably be expected to be funded from the CSSB:

- a clerk
- a professional officer who has expertise in RE curriculum design
- a publicly accessible place to meet
- the reasonable expenses of members
- publishing the agreed syllabus and other SACRE materials (including agendas and minutes), most usually on the LA website
- NASACRE subscription and AGM attendance.

A small-scale survey carried out by NASACRE in 2019 suggested that many SACREs were being underfunded. This report, based on a much fuller data set, is intended to enable policymakers to make informed decisions about SACRE funding.

Research Methodology

A freedom of Information request was sent to all Local Authorities in England on the 6th November 2020 by the National Association of SACREs. Specifically, the questions were as follows:

1. How much funding was allocated to your local authority in the ‘ongoing commitments’ category of the CSSB (Central Schools Services Block)
2. How much of the funding specified in (1) above (as a raw figure and a percentage) was allocated to SACRE related spending and if relevant to ASC (Agreed Syllabus Conference) related spending?
3. How much money from the CSSB funding for 2019-2020 did you spend on:
 - (a) Democratic services to support SACRE meetings through 2019-2020 (e.g., a clerk)
 - (b) Professional support (A Religious Education specialist advisor or consultant to support the work of SACRE)
 - (c) Support for schools, including CPD and training specifically for Religious Education and or Collective Worship
 - (d) Other costs: please specify e.g., for separate clerking costs
4. How much money from other funds outside the CSSB fund (e.g., the community integration fund) was used to support RE in your local authority with schools?
5. When was your last agreed syllabus for RE revised, and how much did it cost to complete this revision? (i.e., to write it, develop it, publish it and launch it including initial training for your schools)
6. How/Where would a member of the public access your Agreed Syllabus for RE?
7. Who is the contact for SACRE business in your LA? (Name and email address)
8. Are there any barriers for providing funding to fulfil your statutory duties in relation to SACRE and/or the Agreed Syllabus Conference that you want to tell us about?
9. Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Responses were obtained from 136 LAs, with 15 not supplying answers by the end of March 2021.

Following an analysis of the data received, the following conclusions were reached:

¹⁰ Gavin Williamson (2019) private correspondence, 15th August. <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-246-letter-from-gavin-williamson.pdf>

1. Total Authority spend on SACRE

Of the 111 local authorities that reported any spending on SACRE, 82% of the total, the mean spend was £11,000.46. The remaining 25 authorities, 18% of the total, reported allocating no funding to SACRE. The biggest spend by any authority was £93,574, whilst one Authority appeared to use only £105.

One explanation for the wide variance in spending could be the size of the LA, and the number of schools; an LA with few schools may be expected to use less money to fund RE provision in those schools. It would be tempting to assume that those LAs providing the most significant levels of professional support were the largest authorities. That is not the case. Figure 1 below, indicates that there appears no correlation between the number of state-funded secondary schools in an LA (a reasonable measure of the size of the authority) and the amount spent by the LA on SACRE.

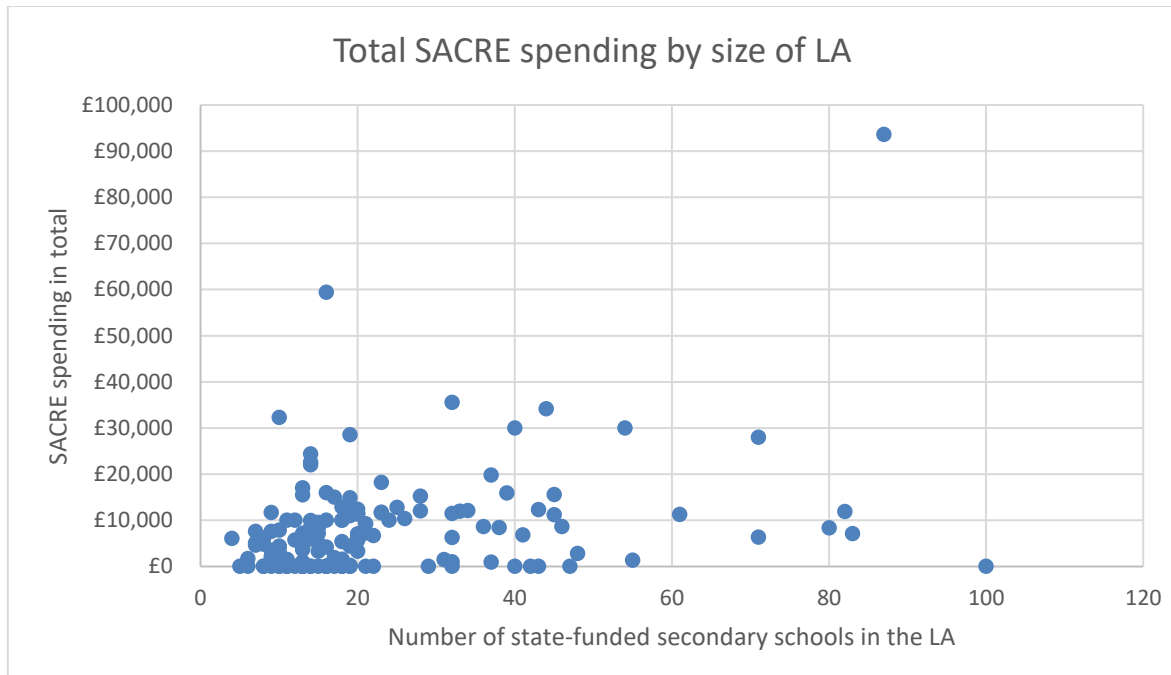


Figure 1

2. CSSB and Funding Sources for SACRE

The expectation of the Department for Education is that SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences are funded from the Central School Services Block (CSSB).

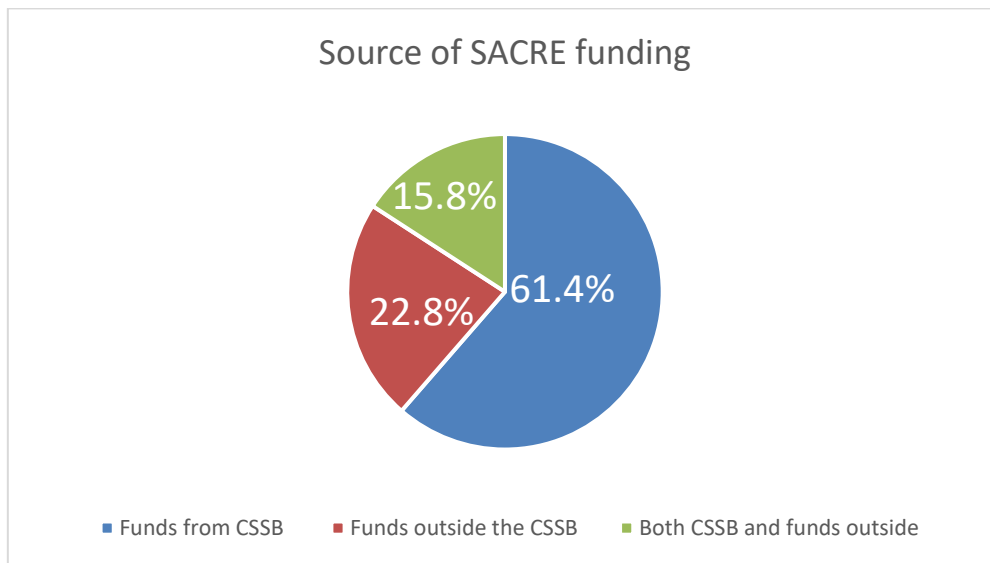


Figure 2

- 62 authorities (61.4% of the 101 that responded to this question) reported that they use funding for SACRE from the CSSB only
- 23 authorities (22.8% of the 101 that responded to this question) reported using funding from outside the CSSB only
- 16 authorities (15.8% of the 101 that responded to this question) reported using both sources.

The most well-funded SACRE received 6% of the CSSB from their LA in 2019/20. The average spending on a SACRE, Religious Education and Collective Worship, as a percentage of the allocated CSSB funding source (based on data from 136 LAs) was less than one percent, 0.72%.

Of the 136 SACREs who responded to the FOI, 79% (107) spent under 1% of CSSB fund or equivalent on SACRE, RE and Collective Worship in 2019/20. There is no correlation between the size of the LA and the proportion of CSSB that is used on SACRE business as the scattergram below shows.

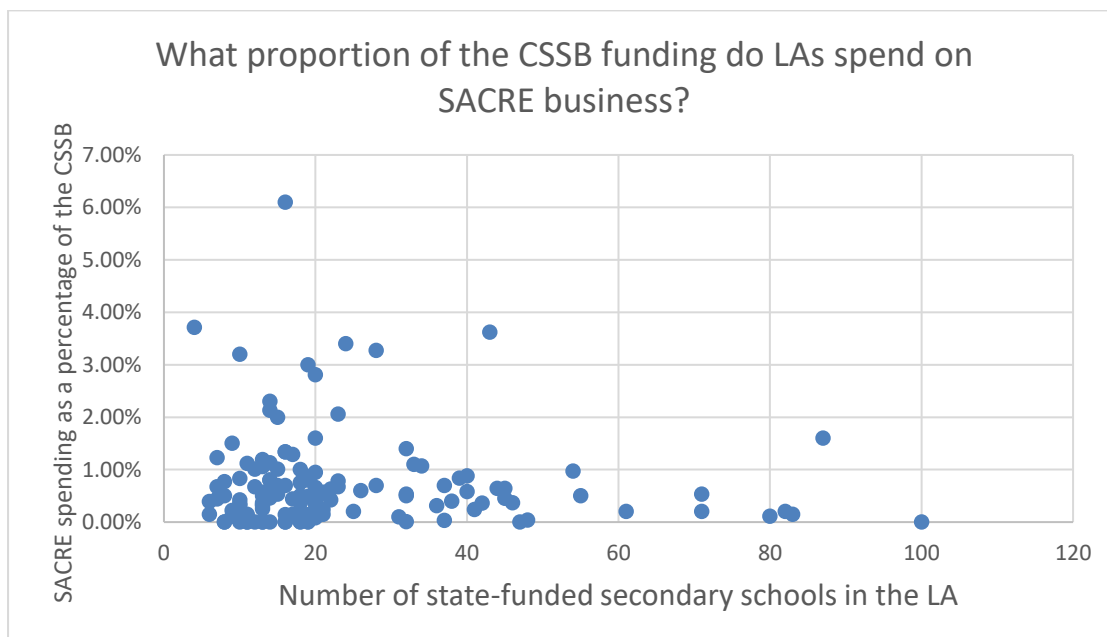


Figure 3

3. Spending on Specific Items

We asked LAs how much they allocated to **professional support** including advisers and consultants. 100 LAs answered this question. 27 reported that they allocated £0 of funding to professional support. The average spend on professional support by the 73 authorities that responded to say they allocate funding was £7,095.03. The responses ranged from £59,418 to £145.

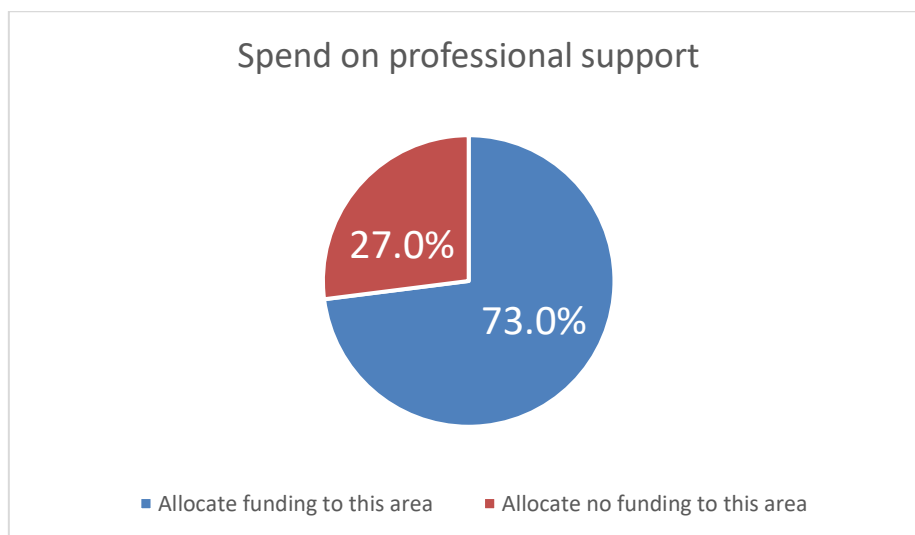


Figure 4

We asked LAs how much they allocated to **democratic services** (e.g. clerking). 49 authorities responded to this question. Seven authorities reported allocating £0. 42 authorities responded that they allocate some funds to this area and their mean spend on democratic services was £2648.18. The responses ranged from £25,574 to £200.

We asked LAs how much they allocated to **supporting RE in schools**. 80 authorities responded to this question. 42 authorities allocate £0. The mean spend for the 38 authorities who allocate funding to this area is £2529.07. The level of support ranges from £10,829 to £112.

It is difficult to see how a SACRE can be fulfilling its statutory duties, let alone performing well, if an LA does not allocate some budget to professional support, democratic services and support for schools.

4. The Agreed Syllabus

The LA must “institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus within five years of the last review, and subsequently every five years after the completion of each further review¹¹. When the FOI was sent in November 2020 this would mean that the oldest syllabus review should have been 2015. Seven LAs told us that their syllabus was last reviewed earlier than that, three in 2014, one in 2013, two in 2012 and one in 2010, making it 10 years old. This most fundamental duty of LAs is subject to difficulties due to underfunding. When we contacted those SACREs they did tell us that those very old syllabuses were at various stages of review.

81 LAs disclosed the cost of completing their last revision of the Agreed Syllabus, including writing, developing, publishing and launching it with initial training for schools. The mean reported cost was £8,452. The most expensive Agreed Syllabus review was almost £45,000, with five Authorities spending committing more than £20,000 of resource to the last syllabus review; of these five, four were locally produced and one was licenced from RE Today. Most syllabuses (30) cost between £5,000 and £10,000. Three LAs claimed to have spent less than £1,000 on the review, with one suggesting a total cost of £81.

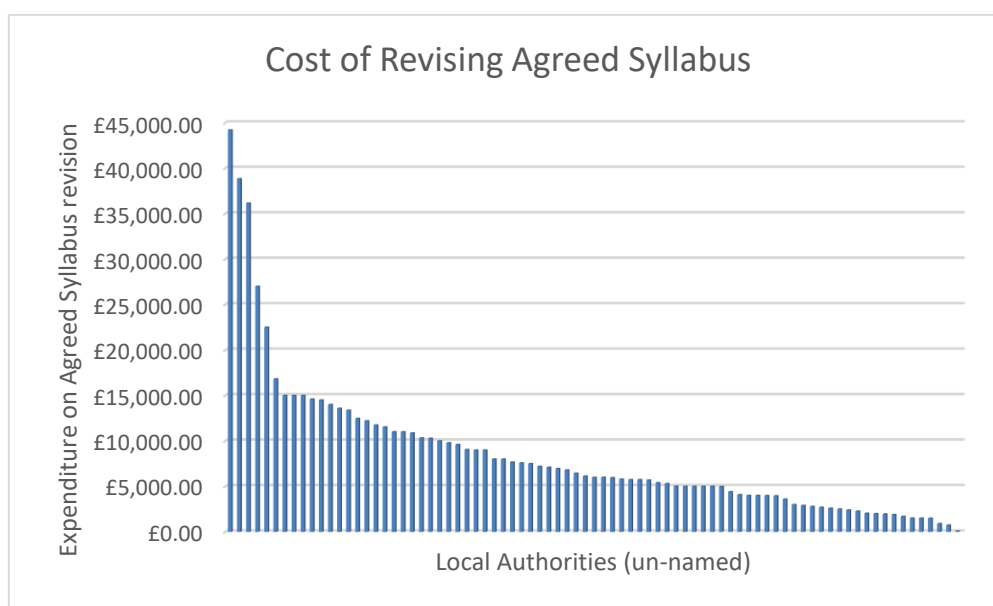


Figure 5

It is difficult to see how a syllabus can be properly reviewed without a significant spend. If minor changes are required, we would consider £5,000 to be a very bare minimum spend. We would expect a proper review process to cost in excess of £10,000.

¹¹ DCSF (2010) *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance*, Page 11.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf

5. Recommendations

A. SACREs

SACREs should consider offering formal advice to the local authority about the level of spend required for them to discharge their functions properly. They should share this report with their LA and ask for it to be noted. They should request from the LA their response to our FOI of November 2020 and then compare their local data with the national data in this report. This would provide many SACREs with a rich discussion to have with their LA. The Secretary of State himself has stated that the DfE “would investigate any complaint that statutory responsibilities were not being delivered to ensure that the LA took any necessary remedial action.”¹² SACREs should be able to set out ambitious work programmes without the fear of underfunding. Further clarification of the statutory responsibilities of LAs in respect of their SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences can be found in the 2010 guidance.¹³

B. Local Authorities

LAs must adequately fund SACREs to enable them to carry out their statutory duties and to support high quality RE and collective worship in schools.¹⁴ We consider 2% of CSSB to be a reasonable spend to enable this. LAs must set aside sufficient money to ensure the Agreed Syllabus Review can be effective every five years. We reiterate that as a minimum expectation, LAs must provide the following:

- a clerk
- a professional officer who has expertise in RE curriculum design;
- a publicly accessible place to meet;
- the reasonable expenses of members;
- publishing the agreed syllabus and other SACRE materials (including agendas and minutes), most usually on the LA website.
- NASACRE subscription and AGM attendance.

The minister for school standards; Nick Gibb MP included this statement in response to a parliamentary question from Stephen Timms MP. “If the Department is informed that an individual SACRE or ASC is experiencing difficulties in fulfilling its statutory duties, the Department will contact the local authority to remind them of their duty to support their activities satisfactorily.”¹⁵

C. The DfE

In line with the Secretary of State’s directive above, the department should write to LAs who have not published a timely Agreed Syllabus review and ask for an explanation and a project plan. They should also write to the 25 authorities who declared no spending on SACRE business and ask them how they can be expected to fulfil their statutory duties without using any funds.

D. Ministers

Finally, NASACRE recommends that government ministers should reiterate at every opportunity the expectation that Local Authorities will use a significant portion of their CSSB to adequately fund SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences to discharge their statutory duties.

Thanks

NASACRE would like to express gratitude to all those who give so much to ensure that SACREs do their very best to support high quality RE and Collective Worship in schools across the country. Thanks also to Claire Clinton, Marie Cooper, Paul Smalley and Deborah Weston for putting this report together.

Cover photograph of a SACRE meeting taken by P. Smalley.

¹² Gavin Williamson (2019) private correspondence, 15th August. <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-246-letter-from-gavin-williamson.pdf>

¹³ DCSF (2010) *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance*, pages 10ff: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf

¹⁴ *ibid.*, page 11

¹⁵ HC Deb, 28 March 2018, cW <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2018-03-28/134697>