1. Background to the work

In 2003, Easton Community Association (ECA) was awarded a 3-year grant by the Home Office (GOSW) under the 'Connecting Communities' community cohesion programme to provide faith and BME groups in the BS5 district of Bristol with support for their applications for funding. This support would take the form of increased local knowledge and statistics to back up the need, and better contacts with funding bodies to increase the chances of success.

However, the ECA went into liquidation in 2005, leaving the project in jeopardy. As a result, the Home Office asked Community Resolve (originally providing one part-time researcher to the project) to take over the remaining grant in order to provide the following:

- To collect previously unknown data in two separate areas - 'hidden' (ie otherwise unreported conflict) experienced by local individuals, groups, traders and organisations; and the scope and practice of local faith groups

- To make available the information gathered as support for funding applications from Black and other minority ethnic groups in the BS5 area.

Over the following 9 months, these aims were achieved via the following objectives:
- To create a database of information about local conflict and conflict support needs
- To explore the experiences of, and challenges for, faith groups in the BS5 area, including developments in interfaith work and understanding
- To identify and design suitable ways of working between multi-faith groups to promote cross-faith understanding, and where necessary, conflict resolution
- To outline how this information can support funding bids from BME groups within the area, and to share it with local groups, organizations and funding support bodies
- To run community exhibitions in central Bristol as a way of promoting cohesion in the area, to celebrate Britain's diverse cultures and faiths, and to increase understanding of these through the South West
- To write a final report, including recommendations as to how this work can be usefully continued beyond March 06.

This report summarises the outcomes achieved between July 2005 and March 2006, although unfortunately there is no continuation funding for this work beyond March 06. Nonetheless, we outline here how we think this initial work can be built on, including links made with other agencies in the central Bristol area to continue what has been started.

2. Collecting information about conflict and support needs

Over the last two years, we have been talking to organisations and individuals living in central Bristol about conflict - how it affects their daily lives, and how much they are aware of conflicts that occur in the areas we live and work in. Below, we present a summary of the types of conflict people spoke of.

We wanted to explore whether people's experiences differ / match according to their age, gender, race or religion, and whether communities see the signs / indicators of a conflict long before it actually happens.

What happens when everyone is aware of an imminent conflict but no one talks about it? Or they talk about it but don't know what to do, particularly if it's not serious enough (or they don't feel safe enough) to report it to the police … yet!

This informative exercise has been a great opportunity to get to know more about people's concerns regarding 'hidden' conflict (ie conflict that goes unreported to the police or other agencies), and to talk to them about how they experience it firsthand on a day-to-day basis.

> Community Resolve was established in 2003 with the aim of transforming the negative energy of community conflict into an opportunity for understanding and communication. We see conflict as:
>
> *a state of tension between people, ideas or interests*
>
> *a discord, clash or struggle, often over resources*
>
> *an opportunity for change and growth*

The questionnaire
A sample of 70 organisations and individuals primarily working and living in the BS5 and BS2 areas of Bristol were interviewed over a period of 24 months (*see Appendix 1 for breakdown of those who took part*). Participants were selected in one of two ways: as a small voluntary organisation working in BS5 or BS2, primarily for/with BME communities, or as a trader working on Stapleton Road and surrounding streets in Easton. A small percentage of organisations – a total of 12 - were based outside these areas but worked in central Bristol.

Participants were interviewed for approximately 1 hour by an interviewer / researcher, using a questionnaire to gather confidential information (*see Appendix 2 for the full questionnaire*). Participants were made aware that their identities would remain anonymous, and that part of the information volunteered would be used to give an overview / picture of the conflicts that individuals and organisations living and working in the BS5 and BS2 areas are aware of. Although many of the findings will remain confidential, we have provided a breakdown of the types of conflict participants talked about.

This is an ongoing project. If you would like to be interviewed, please phone Amanda Radix at Community Resolve to arrange a convenient date and time on 0845 345 7461.

The questions we asked …
Below is a brief summary of the findings from the questions '*What would you regard as a conflict situation*? and '*What types of conflict occur*?'.

We started all interviews by asking people '**What would you regard as a conflict situation?**'. This question was valuable in getting people to focus on the question of conflict, which many of us choose to ignore or pretend is not there. However, many of the interviewees who struggled initially with this question, or with linking the idea of conflict to their own experiences, finished the interviews by saying how interesting it was to talk about it, and how much more there was to say.

By asking for their definitions, we got an insight into people's attitudes to conflict and what it means to them, including attitudes informed by specific cultural and religious practices as well as experience. For example, some of our interviewees see conflict as a frequent occurrence, dealt with as it arises by particular people in the community or through specific or traditional procedures. Others view it as a crisis where confrontation is to be avoided at all costs, or alternatively as something to be tackled head-on.

All of these responses have relevance for the types of conflict resolution approaches used most effectively in the community by institutions (such as schools or the police), by agencies such as our own, and by individuals working in a peacemaking role whether by accident or by design.

When we asked participants '**What types of conflict occur?**', we encouraged them to mention as many types of conflict as they knew about, and many participants ticked multiple categories (*see box*). Conflict between cultural groups was the main type of conflict participants mentioned (39 participants out of 70), with conflict between adults and young people a close second. Thereafter, problems between the generations, between faith groups, in schools and within families were mentioned, with participants speaking of discrimination, homophobia, put downs, racist views and threatening behaviour with knives. Nearly all the religious groups surveyed mentioned problems with other groups who could be described as 'fundamentalist' or 'evangelical' in stance, regardless of their religion.

One example of inter-group conflict that was given were tensions between traders in the area, where established businesses were under the impression that traders from new immigrant communities don't pay business rates thanks to

Types of conflict you know of?
Between adults and young people
Between different cultural groups
Between faith groups
Between family or kin groups
Between neighbours
Between the generations
Between political groups
Between those with more traditional and those with less traditional attitudes
Domestic violence
Drug-provoked conflict
In schools
Other – specify
Physical abuse
Prostitution provoked conflict
Vandalism
Verbal abuse
Violence on the street
With / between gangs

special grants. In reality, it emerged that these communities don't always know that they have to pay, and so don't, rather than receiving preferential treatment. This is a clear example of where conflict could be avoided by better communication, and for Community Resolve, such information means looking at working with BEST (Bristol East Side Traders) to develop an appropriate and affordable training for local shopkeepers and other traders (*see box below*).

Conflict between different cultural groups varied in severity from social banter within groups (not expressed outside the group), to verbal abuse and threat or actual physical violence. Most frequently mentioned confrontations were those between Somali young people (some newly arrived in the city) and more established communities in Barton Hill and St Pauls.

Interestingly, participants highlighted how different age groups can play different roles in escalating conflict: younger people appear to be more confrontational, while older people in communities often help to perpetuate rumours through talk at home and in communities. Such discussions can impact on some of the youngest age groups and add to disturbances in school or on the street.

Disputes over territory affect all age groups, particularly when triggered off by housing strategies. Many participants mentioned the impact of housing a large number of people from one community in the middle of a community they know to be hostile to outsiders, regardless of colour, religion or cultural background. A few participants mentioned an increase in activity and influence from far-right groups such as Combat 18 (a white supremacist group) and the BNP (British National Party). Refugees were mentioned as most affected by this activity, and specifically as suffering harassment in refugee accommodation (*see table of reported harassments, page 6*).

Conflicts between traders

With the arrival of new communities in Bristol, specific problems are arising in regard to trading. On Stapleton Road, where we talked to most traders, shopkeepers appear to have two major issues to contend with:

- an increase in shops run by new arrivals who don't speak much English. This language barrier has contributed to the established communities feeling like they are not welcome in the new shops, although the shopkeepers in question acknowledge this as a difficulty and say they would like to welcome all in their shop - lack of language means they have not been able to articulate this.
- the growing occurrence of salesman selling goods and wares out of the trunks of their cars more cheaply than those sold in shops just a few yards away. This is a great cause of tension as the cheaper price is possible because of avoiding the overheads that a legitimate vendor has. When questioned, salesmen said they can't see what the fuss is about - this is the way that entrepeneurship develops in their country. It hadn't occurred to them to conduct themselves otherwise.

Conflicts between the generations Participants talked of many conflicts that they were aware of, with involvement from all age groups and all cultures. Clashes arise over respect, language, dress sense and religion, most of which take place in the home closely followed by incidents on the street. Inter-generational conflict within families was also mentioned frequently, mainly around respect and differing attitudes, generally caused by a sense of exclusion felt by age groups at either end of the spectrum – elders and young people both feel like they are not valued.

Conflict and faith groups When we asked participants about conflict between faith groups, almost a third of them (21 of 70 participants) were aware of tensions between different faiths and between individuals of all ages living in the area. Many of the participants who highlighted faith as a source of conflict were talking as much about conflict within faith groups as conflict between faiths. Many examples given were tensions over differing ethos and styles of teaching in mosques, temples and churches. Where participants highlighted conflict between **traditional and less traditional attitudes**, they seemed to be intrinsically linked to stand-offs within cultural and religious communities. Examples given ranged from the way in which people practise religion or talk to people from other generations to the way that people conduct their lives, such as having children out of wedlock or engaging in interracial relationships.

Conflicts between families or kin groups A small number of people mentioned entrenched conflicts between families triggered off by disturbances at school, old rivalries, or divisions brought about by feelings of injustice and betrayal. Whatever the reason for this type of conflict, it appears to involve all age groups with most incidents recorded occurring on the street and in schools.

Conflict breakdown by postcode areas - at a glance …				
Priority concern	Overall	BS2	BS5	BS1+BS6
1	Cultural groups	Adults & young People	Cultural groups	Adults & young people + Schools
2	Adults & young People	Faith groups + Generations	Adults & young people	Cultural groups, family & kin, neighbours, political groups, generations, traditional and less traditional attitudes, violence on the street
3	Generations	Families or kin, neighbours, traditional & less traditional attitudes, schools	Violence on the street	Faith groups, domestic violence & drug provoked conflict.

Conflicts between neighbours Cheap housing materials have a lot to answer for! Many tenants or residents have complaints over noise, particularly in new build flats and houses where the walls and ceilings are paper thin. When the complaints are not to do with noise they are often about problems over parking, litter and cultural differences.

Conflicts in schools Many of the issues in the community spill over into schools, some activities and tensions re-enacted on a smaller scale but often with equally severe consequences. There were multiple accounts of conflict between different communities and incidents of young people in primary and secondary schools being sent home for carrying weapons. Participants felt that young people are often easily influenced at home by the talk of elders and by what they see on the news about their particular area, contributing to a cycle of fear. In other research by Community Resolve, young people have stated that they carry weapons in order to protect themselves, without realising that doing so significantly increases their chances of injury.

Violence on the street When interviewed people referred both to actual violence they had witnessed or heard about secondhand, and to an atmosphere of violence - in particular suspected gang activity and related threat. Related to this were the effects of **drug-provoked conflict**, including an increase in the carrying of weapons as well as territorial and other disputes conflict between different cultural groups dealing in drugs.

Increased domestic violence An increase in domestic violence has been particularly noticed by groups working in this field, but also by groups who don't. Frontline workers say they hear more and more accounts of domestic violence as they strike up a relationship with their users. There is evidence linking a rise in domestic violence to increased levels of hostility that people have to face outside their home (*see table below*).

Increase in harassment and violent attacks
Although our interviews have mainly uncovered hidden and unreported conflict, our results are mirrored by data on harassment and violent attacks compiled by Avon & Somerset Police, which show an increase in such attacks in the Bristol area between 04/05 (light) and 05/06 (dark):
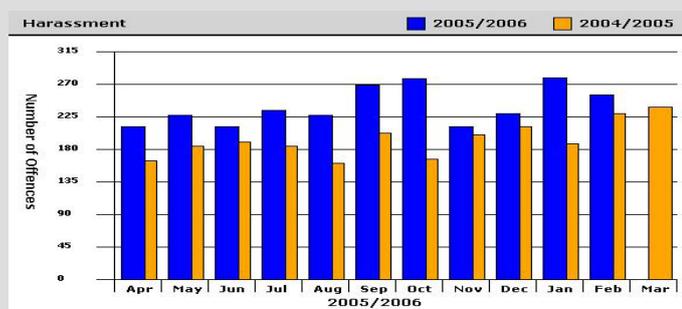
Harassment
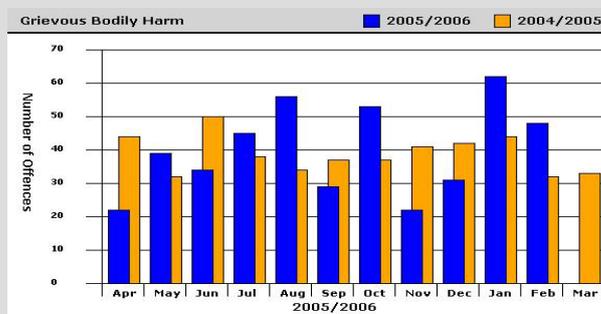
Grievous Bodily Harm

www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/information/crimestats/displaystatistics

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How frontline agencies and workers currently deal with conflict
Many of those interviewed were unaware of services and agencies that they
could turn to in order to get advice, access services and receive training in
order to pre-empt conflict or to develop the skills and language of conflict
transformation. Participants from local organisations stated that the most
common way to deal with issues is to do it directly –

- 44% of conflict incidents are dealt with by staff with no training, but
  often considerable experience
- 63% of participants stated that no-one in their organisation is trained to
  deal with conflict
- 82% would like to receive training specifically to deal with conflict
  resolution
- 56% said that if they had more funding to spend on training they would
  spend it on training for staff in conflict resolution
- 38% would spend it on training in cultural awareness between the
  different communities that they work with.

Most acknowledged that a significant percentage of cases later reported to
the police (contacted by 16% of those interviewed as a first port of call)
had shown indicators of growing trouble for up to a year prior to a reported
incident. Community leaders and police community support officers (PCSOs)
were contacted just as much as the police.

Of those participants who did consider using alternative services and agencies
to approach in a conflict situation, 58% used other community organisations
who they deemed to be experienced in handling similar problems or who
worked in the same field. Others felt that they could confide in a more
experienced colleague if appropriate.

What local workers want
The contents of these interviews have
given us greater understanding into
the kinds of conflict that people are
witnessing or are affected by in the
central Bristol area, and has
indicated what kind of support local
people would like around conflict
situations they encounter. It has also
highlighted a few issues which are
either just beginning to be dealt with
or could escalate if left to continue.
Asked whether they were interested
in further support or training around
conflict, well over 80% said that they
were very interested in being kept
informed of available courses or
networks.

'What support services would be useful?'	
25%	Training for members of your organisation/ community in handling conflict
19%	Information about other groups in your area which are offering conflict resolution services/have experience in resolving conflict
18%	Conflict workers who are fluent in languages relevant to the community you serve
13.5%	Specific training for young people within your community to enable them to work with other young people around conflict
10.5%	Various, including legal advice and training in personal safety
7.5%	Facilitating communication between organisations in conflict
4.5%	A phone/web helpline dealing with conflict issues
2%	Training course for your organisation

3. Faith in Easton

This is the summary of a report by Leotta Goodridge, an Easton-based community worker with years of experience in the fields of faith and multi-faith working. She is a member of the Black Churches … Additional surveys were carried out by Nathalie Griffin, a faith and funding support worker on the project working with Community Resolve.

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the valuable role of faith communities in assisting the growth of social cohesion and in the delivery of a wide range of social welfare and community services. In different parts of the country, faith communities have been engaged in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Renewal community cohesion programme, and the Government's recent white paper, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society (Jan 2005),* illustrates how faith groups have a vital role to play in community activities:

> *'The importance of Community Cohesion to a strong and healthy society was recognised following the 2001 disturbances in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford. Reports into the disorder identified a common theme of a lack of interaction between individuals of different cultural, religious and racial backgrounds in society.'*

The important role of faith, religion and spirituality in maintaining a harmonious civil society is undeniable. People of faith have a role to play in public order, social stability and ethical matters, and a strong faith can contribute to motivation at work, engagement with education, and civic participation. Most faiths also organise social and leisure activities, providing a chance for people to meet and get together.

This summary incorporates extensive experience of local inter-faith working with the results of a short survey of Bristol's BS5 faith groups carried out in 2005-2006, and looks at the significance of cross-faith working and understanding. It also highlights some of the tensions and difficulties that arise around inter-faith contact, gives suggestions on how to contact faith groups in your area and briefly discusses ways to improve access to funding for local faith groups, including the need to develop productive partnership work. Throughout, the term 'faith groups' is used to mean worshipping groups with a regular meeting place or venue located within the Easton and Lawrence Hill areas of Bristol.

Inter-faith and multi-faith work
The terminology for the initiatives bringing different faith communities together are confusing, even for those involved on a day-to-day basis.

A multi-faith partnership in Bristol was set up with the assistance of the local authority to feed into to the Local Strategic Partnership and give input to other initiatives. Multi-faith groups have a significant role in regeneration or Neighbourhood Renewal and act as a forum for discussion between local faith groups.

The Bristol Inter Faith Group builds on existing good practice initiated by the Inter Faith Network, funded by the Community Cohesion Unit of the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Local Government Associations. The Bristol Inter Faith Group was also set up as a forum for communication between religious groups, and works with the Lord Mayor's office to ensure partnership between local inter-faith structures and local government.

Religious affiliations of BS2/BS5 residents – reports from 70 interviewees about people who use their services	
Christianity	22%
Islam	20.5%
Unknown	20.5%
Agnostic	11%
Hinduism	10%
Sikhism	6.5%
No response	4%
Judaism	2%
Buddhist	1.5%
Atheist	1%

Results from Community Resolve mapping project, 2006

Visible differences and identity
For a considerable number of people, including those in the most socially marginalised communities, belief and their affiliation to a faith community provides a significant aspect of their identity. As a result, the ethnic, cultural and religious aspects of individuals' identities are often closely related and visibly apparent. For more details about which religious communities are living in BS5, see box above.

This visible difference can lead to unfair treatment, and in our survey, many interviewees who were members of minority ethnic groups felt that in practice religious and racial discrimination could not be separated. Where religious identities, beliefs and practices are closely linked to an individual's cultural, ethnic and national background, negative responses and unfair treatment based upon their identities and traditions may also be related to expressions of racism and xenophobia.

Most groups we talked to emphasised the complexity of the relationship between ethnicity and religious identity. Religious difference, however, is not solely a matter of visible difference nor is discrimination on the basis of religion limited to racism. Having a pronounced faith of any kind can make you a target, as one member of an Evangelical Christian group observed:

> *'The more active you are the more vulnerable you become.'*

The problem can lie with the perceptions of the wider (broadly secular) society, for whom religion is often not seen as intrinsic to identity, while race is. The complexity of the issues was identified by one local group discussing what makes people feel Jewish. For them, key elements ranged from culture and ethnicity to philosophical, religious and theological beliefs, and for some just a 'feeling' they had, whether they were born into the religion or had adopted it.

Working with young people
In discussion with young people aged 18-20, the view was expressed that religion seems to have appropriated young people's anger about being unhappy with their lives. Nevertheless, those young people who are more educated than their parents do see themselves in a position of being able to speak out on behalf of their elders who cannot, or would not, do so on their own behalf.

It was suggested that a framework be constructed which allowed young people of faith to express their views. Similarly, a number of respondents in the short survey highlighted the need for greater funding to do more work with young people.

Making contact with faith groups
Approaching each faith community in the same way, via a religious leader, may not always produce a similar response or ensure equality of access. In reality, the first point of contact for faith groups is often a secretary, public relations person or trustee rather than someone with a formal religious role.

The larger religions – Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, for example – do have trained religious specialists to focus on conducting worship or prayers, teaching or preaching, while others are responsible for pastoral and community care. In other faith groups, such as the Sikh, Quaker and Buddhist communities, leadership positions are filled by lay people and community elders. If you want to find the first point of contact for local faith groups, see information on the *Acorns to Oaks* funding support CD in this report; the 'Faith groups working in BS5' directory gives details of the appropriate person to contact in your area.

Conflict between religious groups
Nearly all the religious groups surveyed mentioned problems with other groups who could be described as 'fundamentalist' or 'evangelical' in stance, regardless of their religion. An awareness of these tensions between different faiths in the city, albeit at a low level, were a catalyst for separate, exploratory work around promoting understanding carried out by Community Resolve (*see Developing cross-faith dialogue, page*).

Due to the size and visibility of the Christian communities, concerns were expressed that what are described as 'inter-faith' initiatives can, for practical purposes, exclude the concerns and interests of other religions. Examples were also given of where differing needs caused tensions between groups, with an instance cited in which a prayer room initially established for 'multi-faith' usage had become solely used by Muslim worshippers because of anxieties around shared use. In the shorter survey regarding inter and multi-faith working, fears of having to compromise elements of one's own religion, being unable to 'agree to disagree' about certain theological issues, and not having enough time to learn about other faiths were all given as barriers to working with other faith groups.

Faith groups working in partnership

People of all faiths (and none) must develop more open, engaged and constructively critical ways of encountering and talking to each other. Developing and building good relations with people with different faiths and beliefs means finding ways to live our lives of faith with integrity, and allowing others to do so too. Our different religious traditions offer us many resources to teach us the importance of good relationships characterised by honesty, comparison and generosity of spirit.

In order to continue the work of community development, and to build the capacity of local faith communities, faith communities need to come together to develop an effective faith-based regeneration and community development strategy for Bristol. Below is one framework for how this could be achieved, outlining how all faith groups could work in true partnership with others in the central Bristol area, as well as community and voluntary organisations.

 VISION: To enable faith-based regeneration practitioners to
- Learn and gain inspiration from each other, across the different faith traditions in the city
- Establish a common voice to communicate with local government and other relevant authorities about regeneration and community development issues

AIMS
- To encourage the active engagement of faith groups in local regeneration initiatives and partnership
- To build the capacity of faith groups by identifying, demonstrating and promoting good practice
- To identify the training and skills development needs of faith-based regeneration practitioners
- To demonstrate the benefit of cross-faith collaboration and co-operation, while at the same time, promoting the diversity and plurality of faith traditions in creating common good
- To provide an interface between the various levels of decision making, from national strategic policy to grass roots action
- To build a shared and evolving learning culture, which facilitates the economic, cultural, social and spiritual sustainability of individuals and communities.

FIRST STEPS
- Create opportunities for practitioners to meet and share ideas, to interact with policy makers, to organise conferences and seminars
- Work in partnership the voluntary and community sectors
- Maintain a website for sharing information and ideas
- Liase with key government departments
- Develop local capacity building programmes

FUTURE ACTION
- Networking opportunities for practitioners
- A conduit for public agencies and other organisations to link with faith groups engaged in regeneration
- The promotion of good practices and the skills and knowledge for effective participation
- Gateways for participation in regeneration to otherwise socially excluded communities
- Raised awareness in faith groups of how to become involved in regeneration
- Regeneration resources to be directed more effectively, reaching to the core of the communities and promotion community cohesion
- Ensuring the inclusion of enhanced equal opportunities for all.

These recommendations are those of the author only, unless otherwise attributed. February 2006

4. Developing cross-faith dialogue

As highlighted in the *Faith in Easton* report, there are many initiatives in the city encouraging faith groups to develop a shared understanding. However, difficulties do arise in this process, especially when groups hold clearly opposing beliefs. As a project working to move from conflict to communication, Community Resolve believes there are ways of working that can help build understanding even between people of very divided opinion.

Multi-faith training
One model of that Community Resolve explored during the course of this funding was developing cross-faith dialogue through shared training, encouraging a range of faith perspectives into the room while focussing on other issues. In November 2005, Community Resolve ran a 2-day multi-faith training, *Women of Faith Transforming Conflict*, in central Bristol. This free course was open to women of all faiths who were interested in developing their role in bringing harmony to their communities and to Bristol.

The course was adapted from *Women of Faith Transforming Conflict: A Multi-Religious Training Manual*, based on a series of trainings that *Religions for Peace* ran as part of their Conflict Transformation and Women's Mobilization Program conducted in West Africa and Eastern Europe. This manual was developed through work with 50 interfaith councils, sponsored by *World Conference of Religions for Peace*.

The highly participatory course covered three main elements - conflict transformation, communication and leadership – and looked at understanding conflict and tools to use in conflict situations, including mediation; dealing with anger; communication skills; understanding power; key skills of leadership; and developing cross-faith respect and understanding.

The 16 participants came from a range of faiths and backgrounds and enrolled from across the city and beyond. They included representatives from the Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Quaker and Rastafarian traditions, as well as others with strong spiritual frameworks of their own devising. They were primarily, but not exclusively, women who worked in a community role – social workers, youth workers, voluntary organisations, counsellors and healers, among others – with an age range of roughly 25-60.

One reason for the course's success was that it acknowledged the shared importance of faith to individuals in the way they think and aspire to live.

> **Participant comments**
>
> 'So many ages, temperaments, faiths and cultures discussing such gritty issues'
>
> 'Skills to use in life and in work; I connected with women I might not usually connect with and I was inspired!'
>
> 'Incredibly diverse range of women, good mix of activities, effective trainer – we could contribute our best'
>
> 'I learnt to look at emotions separate from facts, to take people's context into account, and to understand what pushes my buttons and how that affects how I view things.'
>
> 'This course is one of the best I have ever been to.'

In discussion on the course, it became clear that many had come <u>only</u> because faith was mentioned in the title: as one said, '*it was a great opportunity to think about issues in a diverse environment where beliefs/values are recognised*'.

The fact that all the women held different belief systems was a strength on the course – not a threat. The shape of the course allowed individuals to reflect on their own beliefs as well as those of others, and to think about how those beliefs impact on their choices and actions. One participant noted at the end of the course, '*I understand lots more about myself and others, which I think is very important at this time'*.

As this was the first time the course had been run, we discussed as a group how it could move forward. Out of 16 participants, 10 said they would be interested in training to deliver the course themselves, either within their own faith groups, at work or with other groups they engage with. A two-day follow-on course is planned for May 06 with the intention of equipping participants with the exercises and background understanding of conflict to run equally participatory courses. It is anticipated and welcomed that these women will take the course and make it their own.

Developing inter-faith dialogue

A second approach Community Resolve is interested in exploring (preferably in partnership with other groups) is that developed by the Public Conversations Project in Boston, US (www.publicconversations.org).

The mission of the Public Conversations Project is to '*foster a more inclusive, empathic and collaborative society by promoting constructive conversations and relationships among those who have differing values, worldviews and positions about divisive public issues*'. Below, we highlight two of their projects which we feel could be adapted to work in Bristol and beyond.

The Faith Quilts Project brings quiltmakers and faith communities together to create collaborative works of art that express central aspects of each faith tradition's religious and cultural heritage and convey that richness of faith to the broader community (examples illustrated). This innovative project contains a number of separate elements, including:
Collaborative quilt making in and among faith groups in Greater Boston, deepening understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the city's diverse communities of faith.
Documentation via audio, photographic and video recording of participants as they engage in discussions and decision-making during the process of designing and creating their quilts, leading to a 20-minute film used a stimulus for interfaith dialogue.
Exhibitions of small groups of quilts, the screening of the Faith Quilts Project video, and well-designed, facilitated interfaith dialogues (*see next page*).

<u>The Islam Project</u> ran between 2002 and 2003, and brought together individuals from 28 different organisations, including civic leaders and interfaith leaders, to work in three areas: interfaith dialogue; dialogue about civic values; and outreach to specific groups such as healthcare professionals:

Evenings of interfaith dialogue in five different communities, each attended by 50-80 participants, which included clips from a "faith in action" film followed by facilitated dialogue in small groups about how each participant's faith guides them and shapes their actions (*see box below*).

Exploring social values via the exhibition "Islamic Threads in the American Fabric" at Boston's Immigration Museum, followed by small group dialogues that focused on how each participant's social values, whether formed through religious or secular means, relate to their society's ideals.

Wisdom sharing meetings for people with different levels of experience in convening and facilitating interfaith dialogue, so helping to develop these skills across the community.

Community Resolve is very interested in hearing from any groups who would like to explore these approaches further. Please contact Hen Wilkinson on 0845 345 7461.

Developing productive cross-faith dialogue

This is a sample of the format used by the Public Conversations Project to encourage real dialogue between individuals from opposing positions. The format encourages participants to reflect on their own formative experiences, and to accept that others have formed their opinions in a similar fashion. It encourages groups/individuals with strongly conflicting perspectives to meet several times to explore issues between them. The aim of these discussions is **not** to convince the other, but to increase levels of understanding. The discussions generally start with a shared meal. Each individual is then asked to speak in turn after reading a short question. The discussion finishes with a closing round reflecting on what has been raised.

Discussion of agreed ways of working
1) We will speak for ourselves and from our own experience.
2) We will listen with resilience and respect.
3) We will set aside the need to persuade others to agree with us.
4) We will not interrupt.
5) We will "pass" if we do not wish to speak.

Introductions Please say your name, identify your faith community, and share, if you wish, something about a particular image or story that moved you or informed you (please be brief).

First Go Round: Sources of Guidance and Inspiration *Question: 'As you strive to be a faithful person, who/what do you turn to for guidance and inspiration? During your life history were there particularly formative or transformative times that relate to your choosing those sources of guidance and inspiration?'*

- Read Question • Pause • Go around, 2 minutes each

Second Go Round: Faith in Action *Question: 'In what ways, large or small, is your faith or value system expressed in your life?'* - Read Question • Pause • Go around, 2 minutes each

Discussion Have you heard something you'd like to understand more about? - if so, you might want to check to see if you heard it right, then ask a question. Is there anything else you'd like to share that was stimulated by hearing others speak?

Parting Words Is there something else you'd like to say to bring this conversation to a satisfying close?

5. Supporting funding bids from local BME and faith groups

Small organisations and groups invariably struggle when it comes to fundraising, with restricted resources and time to produce exhaustive funding bids. In order to try and help reduce this stress, we produced a free CD for local groups that contains a wide variety of useful information to help them with planning, fundraising and training. The CD includes:

1. <u>Local groups and funding support</u>
    i.   Black and Minority Ethnic groups working in BS5 (Central East Bristol)
    ii.   Faith Groups working in BS5
    iii.   Funding support contact Information

2. <u>Local area statistics</u>
    i.   Links to statistical resources
    ii.   Community conflict reports from Community Resolve
    iii.   Support Against Racist Incidents (SARI) report

3. <u>Helpful tools and resources for organisations</u>
    i.   Employee handbook policy and procedure documents:
            Employment contract
            Employee handbook introduction
            Disciplinary procedure
            Grievance procedure
            Equal opportunities policy
            Communications and IT systems policy
            Data protection and privacy policy – employee data
            Paternity policy
            Maternity policy
            Parental leave policy
            Adoption policy
            Family leave policy

    ii   Links to helpful websites

4. <u>Funding resources</u>
    i.   Funding support contact information
    ii.   Resources and tools for more effective fundraising

5. <u>Faith groups information</u>
    i.   Faith groups working in BS5
    ii.   Developing dialogue between faiths
    iii.   'Faith in Easton' report
   iv.   Links to other resources

6. <u>Training</u>
    i.   Local skills development training
    ii.   Computer training and open-access/drop-in sessions

Although we were unable to translate the entire CD from English, we listed the contents in six different languages, and provided a link to the translation service at Bristol City Council. The Employee Handbook contains templates for organisations to adapt for their own use, all of which were checked by employment lawyers for accuracy (February 2006, with thanks to Burgess Salmon for pro-bono help).

The contents of the CD will be available on the Community Resolve website once completed (May 06, www.communityresolve.org.uk), and the BDA will be continuing work on the Employee Handbook, adding more policies and culturally aware approaches. Please visit their website – www.blackdeva.org.uk – for more information.

6. Images of our community

Over the nine months of our Connecting Communities grant, we have run two community exhibitions featuring the photographs and art of local artists. The aim behind both exhibitions was to stimulate thought and appreciation across central Bristol's diverse communities about how much we all have in common. We also believe that there is great value is using a visual medium to promote thought around cohesion issues, not least because it avoids the issue of limited language and literacy capabilities and can be understood and enjoyed by all.
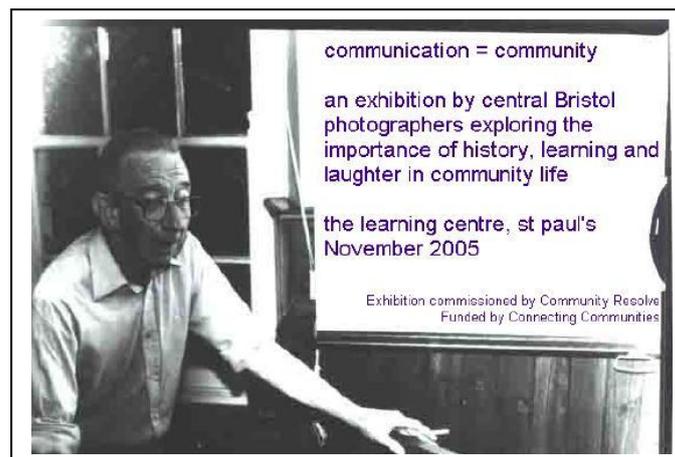
Both exhibitions were created with the aim of circulating them through different areas of central Bristol, and beyond. We wanted to create art that could be displayed in public venues, such as health centre waiting rooms, rather than in galleries.

Communication = community was a photographic exhibition created by local artist Nyika Omowale to celebrate the diversity of our community, highlighting the positive connection between individuals of different ages and genders, and from different cultural and faith groups in our area. The images were accompanied by proverbs from around the world that summed up the importance of working as a whole community, rather than separating into distinct groups. By bringing out the similarities between people of different backgrounds, rather than focusing on the differences, we hoped to build understanding of our common concerns and shared interests. The exhibition moved between several venues in central Bristol before being offered as a touring exhibition for the Home Office regional offices around the South West.

Different faiths – shared community recognises the wide range of peoples and faiths living in central Bristol, including those who operate from a spiritual basis outside established religions. The exhibition contained two

elements – a multi-faith installation by local artist Gloria Ojulari-Sule, based on her visits and research to faith centres in central Bristol, and a photographic exhibition by Mark Simmonds and ????. Gloria's work weaves together images and symbols of different faith, including glimpses of the interiors of different faith venues – mosques, temples, churches – as these are rarely visited by people outside of a particular faith group, while the photographic exhibition looks at individuals from different faith groups.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Conflict work, including developing cross-faith dialogue
The mapping project has clearly outlined a number of latent tensions in the community, involving all community groups and all age groups. Most concerns centre around:

- cross-cultural understanding and communication styles;
- adequate language support for those with limited English, especially when dealing with professional services;
- poor relationships between adults and young people of all backgrounds;
- and a lack of engagement with these tensions among institutions such as schools, housing and the police.

Impact on health The research also highlights possible links between harassment on the streets and increased levels of domestic violence, and there is evidence from other sources that continued levels of unresolved conflict and tension contribute to mental and physical ill-health, as well as causing injury when violence finally erupts.

Creating dialogue The study shows there are extreme views operating within our community, spanning cultural and political divides to include both far right groups harassing new populations and fundamentalist religious communities. Ways of increasing understanding between these groups – though not trying to move them from their beliefs – are worth exploring, especially as the report details how many of the tensions that people are aware of do finally develop into incidents involving the police and other bodies.

Affordable training Participants in the study also confirmed that they feel unsupported in dealing with high levels of tension and aggressive behaviour, and that they would like training and support in how to deal with such situations. However, most acknowledged that as small organisations with limited (if any) budgets for training, this is hard to put in place. This confirms Community Resolve's impression that training for community groups and individuals needs to be affordable and probably subsidised.

Organisational stability Grant makers need to be aware of conflict understanding as a key component of organisational sustainability, as high turnovers of staff in stressful positions can create instability in smaller voluntary organisations and groups. This is supported by participants' comments about the stresses and strains in their own organisations, and limited knowledge about how to cope with them, brought about by financial hardship and understaffing.

Improving access to funding for faith groups
With appropriate development, faith communities could form a platform for a longer-term investment and regeneration strategy in the local area. To achieve this, local faith groups need to work together to demonstrate potential ways and means of harnessing the faith communities' role in the economy, and to provide examples of community involvement which could lead to large-scale funding in future years. In the survey, however, many local faith group representatives explained that their resources are already stretched supporting their own communities, and that they are unable to even build the capacity of their own organisations, let alone engage in inter or multi-faith work.

A successful strategy to increase funding to local faith groups will need to build on much of the current work going on in the city and continue to develop:
  i. Good practice examples of local multi-faith working including ways that the Local Strategic Partnership involves multi-faith structures
  ii. Operating methods of local multi-faith bodies and their range of successful projects
  iii. Ways to deepen and extend multi-faith understanding and cooperation at local level.

Using art to promote cohesion
Over the last 9 months we have explored how the role of community artist can be made more visible. In our area, we have many examples of positive community images – murals, mosaics, photographs and pictures – which pass unnoticed but which provide a subliminal message of togetherness.

With the exhibitions in this project, we have wanted to work out how to take art into the community – health waiting rooms, leisure centres, supermarkets, schools – and encourage people to discuss them and the ideas they provoke. This has not proved easy, as finding the right venues and thinking about security for the art work etc has posed many problems. However, we are still convinced that there is value in using a visual medium to promote community cohesion, whether as stand-alone art or drawn into a dialogue project such as the Quiltmakers project in Boston.

Appendix 2 – Conflict mapping questionnaire

1.

Name of interviewer	
Date of interview	
Name of organisation	
Name of person interviewed	
Role within organisation	
Address, tel and email	

2.   How many people work in this organisation?..........................
         Age range……………………………………………………………………….
         Gender…………………………………………………………………………
         Religion/s………………………………………………………………..
         Languages……………………………………………………………….
         Area/s served……………………………………………………..

3.   General description of organisation

4.   What would you regard as a conflict situation?

5.   Do you think there is a conflict resolution role in the work that your
         organisation does?   Yes / No   If yes, please explain

6.   What types of conflicts occur?
                 a)   What age groups are involved in these conflicts?
                         Under 16   17-24   25-55   55+
                 b)   Which cultural groups are involved in these types of conflicts?
                 c)   Where did these conflict situations take place ?
                         School   Home   Office   Street   Other
                 d)   What's most frequent and concerning?

7.   How do conflicts get dealt with most of the time?

Individual Account   Organisation
Perspective

Staff speak with parties directly
One staff deals with conflict
CR trained staff deals with it
Referral to management
Involve family members
Involve family and friends
Involve community leaders
Involve religious/faith leaders
Referral to resolution service
Contact police
Referral to a non-CR service specify agency _____
No action taken
Other – specify _____

8.   Who do you turn to in a conflict situation? (Individual or Organisation?)

9.   Is there someone in your organisation who deals with conflict?; are they trained? (if yes, *get name, organisation, address, phone numbers and email*)

10.   If you had funding to cover training etc. for your staff / community, what purpose would you use it for?

11.   Can you think of any other funding support you would need around handling conflict?

12.   Which of these services could be useful to your organisation or community?

   - Provision of conflict workers who are fluent in languages relevant to the community you serve
   - Training for members of your organisation/community in handling conflict
   - Specific training for young people within the community you serve to enable them to work with other young people around conflict issues
   - Information about other groups in your area which are offering conflict resolution services/have experience in resolving conflicts relevant to your community
   - Facilitating communication between organisations around areas of potential conflict
   - Access to a phone/web helpline dealing with conflict issues.
   - Training course designed for your organisation
   - Other – specify _____

13.   What other organisations / faith groups /individuals do you think we should talk to? (get *name, organisation, address, phone numbers and email)*.

14.   Would you like to be:
                kept informed of our activities by email newsletter?
                sent any training information relevant to your organisation?
                invited to meetings?
                other – specify _____

15. Notes / Comments