

Chapter 9

FAITH & RELIGION

Themes in this chapter

- Minority Ethnic access to places of communal prayer/worship and education and Faith-based communities, of all Faiths
- Factors of age and rural ethnic isolation making religious identity and heritage an issue of heightened importance
- Fear of racist prejudice and religious intolerance having impact on community relations and expression of identity
- Impact of Christianity on the religious culture of rural life, education and institutions
- Inter-faith tensions
- Role of Faith centres in addressing the support needs of isolated people

In the course of this research, we have talked to participants from a number of Faiths and religious denominations. We compiled an extensive list of Faith organisations in Devon, and made efforts to contact all of them. The table below shows that the majority of those who responded to the question about religion ascribed to a Faith. Many of these, however, stated their religious identity more in cultural terms or described their involvement with their Faith group as 'lapsed'. We'll look at some of the reasons for this within the discussion below. Issues of religion and identity are also revealed in the participants' descriptions of the way they define their ethnic identity, in chapter 4.

Faith and religion were raised as a point of concern by around 35% of the participants (excluding complainant aid cases), from a number of perspectives. The points raised ranged over a number of issues, around which the structure for the contents of this chapter was formed.

Table 9.1

The religious background of the research participants				
Religion	Women	Men	Sex not stated	Totals
Buddhist	3	1	0	4
Chinese	2	2	1	5
Christian				36
	6	8	0	14
Anglican	1	0	0	1
Protestant	2	1	0	3
Church of England	1	2	0	3
Roman Catholic	8	5	0	13
Roman Catholic by Baptism but non-believer	1	0	0	1
Armenian Church	0	1	0	1
Hindu	1	2	0	3
Hindu but happy to go to Church or Mosque	0	1	0	1
Jewish				6
	3	1	0	4
Aethist but culturally Jewish	1	0	0	1
Jewish –secular	1	0	0	1
Jehovah’s Witness	3	0	0	3
Muslim				16
	6	8	1	15
Muslim – not practicing	0	1	0	1
Rastafarian	0	1	0	1
Sikh	1	3	0	4
Sikh and Buddhist	1	0	0	1
Not stated	30	29	2	59
None	18	10	0	30

Table 9.2 Devon County Religion by Ethnicity.	All People	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Any other religion	No religion	Not stated
ALL PEOPLE	704486	527209	1693	335	650	1496	173	2808	114498	55624
White	696587	523988	1324	62	631	472	48	2732	112540	54790
British	683236	515041	1229	54	544	236	45	2571	109995	53521
Irish	3383	2659	25	-	3	9	3	33	358	293
Other White	9968	6288	70	8	84	227	-	128	2187	976
Mixed	3350	1758	33	10	13	193	6	32	883	422
White & Black Caribbean	818	496	-	3	3	5	-	7	202	102
White & Black African	359	204	4	-	-	29	-	3	86	33
White & Asian	1206	611	16	7	4	75	6	12	331	144
Other Mixed	967	447	13	-	6	84	-	10	264	143
Asian	1548	278	32	255	-	619	116	19	124	105
Indian	655	131	6	232	-	51	116	10	64	45
Pakistani	176	47	-	-	-	110	-	-	3	16
Bangladeshi	281	13	-	-	-	247	-	-	9	12
Other Asian	436	87	26	23	-	211	-	9	48	32
Black or Black British	824	549	6	4	3	65	-	7	76	114
Black Caribbean	285	187	3	4	-	12	-	4	39	36
Black African	398	292	-	-	3	42	-	-	20	41
Other Black	141	70	3	-	-	11	-	3	17	37
Chinese	1328	291	146	-	-	-	-	7	753	131
Other Ethnic Group	849	345	152	4	3	147	3	11	122	62

The 2001 Census figures show that religion plays a key part in the identity of 67% of the Black and Minority Ethnic population (including Europeans).

Minority Ethnic access to places of communal prayer/worship and to Faith-based communities

For some Faith groups, the ability to establish rural centres has been a function of their ability to network and of the presence of a critical mass of local people sufficient to establish a formal and accessible religious centre and to afford staffing and administration.

Muslims in northern Devon and southern Devon, have been successful in networking, partly because of the ability to find each other either through 'Indian' restaurants (as owners, employees and customers) and partly because of their proximity as employees in a specific service – for example at North Devon hospital. However, their ability to establish Mosques and to afford the ministry of an Imam is limited by the funds that they are able to raise from their own pockets and from Islamic benefactors/foundations. The difficulty in providing a communal space has an impact on the number of people who can physically come together for prayer, on the accessibility of the centre for women and on the education service that can be provided for children. It also has an impact on the ability of people to enjoy cultural as well as religious communal celebration of key events in the religious calendar which in turn, impact on individuals' sense of cultural expression and identity, and a particular impact on the religious education of children. Some Ahmadiyya Muslims have established a network in south Devon, attracting a small group of individuals from around the region, with support from the Ahmadiyya network around the UK.

In central and southern Devon, volunteers of the Jewish community have been successful in networking through public advertising – sometimes at risk to personal safety in the face of Anti-Semitism - and through the Synagogue, and have attracted particular interest from secular Jews wishing to explore their Jewish identity.

The Baha'is, by virtue of their organisational structure, have networks and rural representatives around Devon, and their community includes Minority Ethnic people from around the world, including people whose family background reflect the Faith's Persian origins as well as White British members of the Faith.

The small Sikh community in Exeter has had links with rural Sikhs, but some of these contacts have dissolved because of distance and because of assimilation being used as a strategy for coping with community relations in rural areas. The small size and profile of the community has also limited its ability to reach Sikhs newly arriving in rural Devon.

There are a number of Buddhist communities in Devon attracting people inside and outside Devon. However, the communities that we succeeded in speaking to attracted mostly White British Buddhists rather than Minority Ethnic local people.

The Eastern Orthodox Church in Exeter described how it was aware that there are many Eastern Europeans in Devon and the representative noted that whilst the Church is a key support service for religious Eastern Europeans, the Church and it's people have trouble finding each other.

Participants of other world Faiths also noted the absence of places of communal gathering, and spoke about the way in which they practice their Faith at home: some spoke of pursuing their spirituality through participation in other Faiths' activities.

Table 9.2 above shows that 41% of Devon's Black and Minority Ethnic population (not including Irish and European people) are Christian. (Of those Black and Minority Ethnic people who stated a religious identity two thirds were Christian.) This indicates that the Christian Churches have a significant role to play in addressing the pastoral and spiritual concerns of a majority of the religious Black and Minority Ethnic population, and in providing a link with the community. However, as we will see later in this chapter (in the section *Role of Faith centres in addressing the support needs of isolated people*,) this research indicates that many people may feel excluded from or on the margins of their Christian community. This is also indicated by the experience this research had in reaching out to Black and Minority Ethnic people through the Churches. Every church under the membership of the Council of Churches Together in Devon was sent information about the research and asked to distribute contact information to Black and Minority Ethnic parishioners. We had only one successful line of contact through this outreach, and had several replies from clergy who indicated that they didn't think there were many Black and Minority Ethnic people in Devon congregations.

The need for local centres in rural Districts for prayer and for religious education for Muslim children.

- *At the Mosque we would like to know more about the extent of the Muslim population in the rural areas.*
- *When moved in with relatives in south Devon I taught the kids Koran and Arabic as there was no Mosque in the area. I want to set up a mosque here in [the District]. Teaching the Koran changed me to be a better person - I stopped clubbing and discoing. Parents can't*

teach their own kids religion. They need a religious teacher. I'd like a Mosque for the children

- *Exeter has a Mosque. It started with a small house then joined several houses together then they built the main Mosque.... But there is a crisis for local Muslims who need to pray. Last year local staff at restaurants paid for an Imam from London to cover the big Eid month. We need someone for Friday prayer. At present a person from [North Devon] is acting as Imam. We are using a house... - we use the lounge as the prayer room. There isn't enough space. A Mosque would solve the problem. I and other Muslims and business people would help to fund it, but we need extra money and planning permission from the Council. Each person would contribute £1000 but that's not enough together, and some can't pay. I spoke to a local Arab Doctor to get some more money from Saudi Arabia. The Council seem to like the idea but nothing's official..... The difficulty is knowing which steps to take and who to approach and then you can negotiate. The Council would be delighted to pass planning permission but how do we get a grant?*
- *50 or 60 people pray together in Barnstaple. In total there are around 150 Muslim people here including women and children. In Ilfracombe there are about 30 - 40 praying and 30 - 40 in Bideford. The women pray at home, but if we had the facilities here we could see them praying too. I would like the kids to get a Muslim education.*
- *There are no places for worship here as we are a minority [Muslim].*
- *I am a Muslim but pray at home – I do not attend Mosque. This is because Exeter is too far.*
- *The previous owner of my business wanted to move to London because he wanted his kids to follow the Muslim religion and Exeter was too far to go.*
- *Life would be better if we had a Mosque built here - lots of Muslim peoples live here.*
- *It's hard to be a Muslim here because you're supposed to pray 5 times a day and that's not accommodated for*

- ☞ *In rural areas it's a disadvantage because of language and religion. We can't celebrate Eid on our own just being the family -it's not the same - no Mosque no prayer. I'm missing the process of discipline to worship.....*
- ☞ *Isolation in rural areas means it's impossible to sow seeds in the kids minds of importance of religion. But it may be OK just that they're brought up to respect religion.*

- **Denominational and cultural issues affecting access to Faith communities.**

The denominational issue also cut across several Faiths and is predicated on the fact that the diversity of traditions and denominations *within* Faiths among the Black and Minority Ethnic population is wider than the diversity of the religious facilities existing in a rural area. The consequence is that some people feel that their Faith needs are not accommodated, or that their particular religious identity would be compromised by involvement with another tradition. Others also were unsure of the welcome that would be extended to them by other denominations of their Faith community. For example, we heard from Shia and Sunni Muslims and from Muslims of different nationalities and with different cultural outlooks who felt that these differences affected their decisions about whether they could comfortably feel part of a Faith community. We also heard from Jewish participants about the distances that some people would have to travel outside of Devon in order to attend a reform synagogue. We also heard from Christians of various traditions from Eastern and Northern Europe about their sense of distance from opportunities to worship within their denominational tradition, and their lack of identity with Protestant or Catholic traditions in Britain. And we heard from Christians who felt that the culture of Christian worship in their denominational churches in Devon was so far removed from the culture of worship they experienced in their countries of origin, or in more culturally diverse parts of the UK, that they felt alienated.

Issues of diversity and conformity

- ☞ *I am a Muslim but pray at home – I do not attend Mosque. This is because Exeter is too far. It's also because I feel more British than Asian because of my upbringing – I am not a typical Asian. I was treated as British in Pakistan. I would prefer a Mosque nearby.. But I have one fear: that people might set me apart because people would feel that I'm not part of them. I'm worried about prejudice*

against the children. And I'm worried that attendance at Mosque may put pressure on the girls to change their way of life – the girls have to live their lives here. I am worried about Mullahs misinterpreting things for political purposes.

☞ *My social training comes from my Islamic culture. Violence is not Islam. The principle is all about concern for others and concern for neighbours. The war on terrorism affects me. Most people in Exeter are Sunni. I am Shia. As soon as I say that everyone - even the Sunni Muslims relate me to Iran. I even feel that the Sunni people in Exeter link me to Hammass. I have to educate my fellow Muslims.*

☞ *People can compromise on dress now. You can wear skirts as long as you are covered properly*

☞ *I'm worried people think I'm not a proper Muslim because I don't wear Hijab. For example I went to the Exeter Mosque in a dress and a scarf. A woman and her daughter said I wasn't Muslim because I was not in Hijab. I don't feel comfortable with Arabs. They say I shouldn't wear make-up. Hijab is cultural. I pray at home but I don't show off my religion. My husband asked me to go to an Islamic Centre with him in London. I wasn't wearing a long, long dress. The other women were in total coverage. Everyone looked at me like a total alien. It made me very nervous. I was so glad to get out of the Mosque. It was very frightening.*

☞ *The culture of Mosque depends on the members.*

Issues to be addressed for Protestants from other countries

☞ *I have my faith but I don't attend church. But there is a Swedish Church in London and they do annual visits to Devon. They came to [town] in June.*

☞ *I am Protestant. I don't know if there is any Protestant church here. [Didn't know that Church of England is Protestant.]*

Diversity of Jewish traditions

☞ *Exeter Synagogue very small – only 53 families – more women than men. Most people go to Bournemouth Reformed Synagogue but it's far away.*

Factors of age and ethnic isolation making religious identity and heritage an issue of heightened importance.

Some participants described how for them and their parents, cultural and religious identity was becoming more important with age. Issues around illness, death and burial were natural causes for concentrating the mind on religious needs in old age. Similarly, the birth of children and rites of passage were also important for people in cultural and/or religious terms. The issues of occupation in retirement and the lack of a business or job to take up one's time also present a challenge in terms of deciding what next to do with life: a decision in which the questions 'who am I?' and 'who do I want to spend my time with?' play a part for most people. We also know from work with the elderly in reminiscence therapy of the natural need in old age to reflect on the past and re-establish symbolic markers in life. The degree to which conversation is of particular importance both as a pastime and a factor in emotional wellbeing, indicates the need for opportunities to share life experience and outlook (both of which are culturally shaped) as basis for satisfying dialogue. The issue of age is relevant to the Minority Ethnic population who will grow old here, and to the elderly and newly retired who are coming here to be closer to younger family members, (who may not share the religious heritage of the parents). With religion being a key marker in many people's ethnic identity, the role of religion and religious communities in addressing the needs of children and the elderly is central.

Jewish and Muslim participants in particular, reported how the impact of being surrounded by the markers of Christian influence in British rural culture served to provide a heightened self awareness of their own religious identity and/or cultural heritage. Some participants noted how this sensitisation was a function of the lack of cultural diversity in rural areas and the cultural dominance of the Church in rural infrastructure.

Secular needs among people of Jewish identity

- *We need a deli that stocks Jewish food and social and cultural support for the secular Jewish community.*
- *I've joined the synagogue just so that I can be buried according to Jewish law. I went once to the Synagogue but I felt uncomfortable because I'm not religious.*

Age, rurality and religious isolation acting to define ethnic identity in religious terms

- ☞ *My parents were orthodox but I very rarely went to synagogue. There was no pressure to get involved religiously. Here in Devon we created our own Jewish environment. It was very liberating and exciting..... When I go to London I enjoy the food and the cultural events but I feel my sense of Jewishness is more meaningful in Devon. Lots of Jews in London keep moving from synagogue to synagogue without settling. You don't get orthodox Jews in Devon because the people who come here want to be more open minded. People are triggered to feel more Jewish when they're here because of death, children's births and schooling and because you're surrounded by this sea of Protestantism. The synagogue is very old – the second oldest Ashkenazi synagogue in the UK - it's a focus for the Devon Jewish community - the community wouldn't exist without it. We met a Jew who had kids with a non Jew - which was the trigger for his Jewishness and then it attracted 'fringe' Jews (artists and all sorts). This led to the creation of a Jewish community of those from the religious fringes. The group decided to become public and advertised an event at the University through posters but we were unexpectedly over-run by many many Jews who came out of the woodwork (well over 50 people).We can attract up to 100 people - lots of whom have non Jewish partners. The Minister for small communities says there's a Jew in each village. There were 8 Jewish kids at a local secondary school at one time.*
- ☞ *I'm English and German and a little bit Jewish. ...Only now after 60 years of living everywhere have I psychologically realised the enormity of the event of being thrown out of Germany, because I was totally identified with being a German girl. The in the UK I was totally identified with being a WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force). But as time went on I became less and less identified with any of the places that I lived in..... I need friendship with individuals with whom I have something in common to feel a sense of identity in a place.*
- ☞ *My sense of ethnicity is coming out now. I am English, not Asian. But I am becoming more Asian as I am getting older – more religious....The house now looks more Asian or Islamic because of the pictures of Mecca and because of the entrance hall.*

Impact of Christianity on the religious culture of rural life and institutions

In particular, the extent to which Christianity is intertwined with rural primary schooling and village activities was described as a source of exclusion from community life and a cause for concern in the education and religious development of children. The dominance of Anglicised Christianity as a cultural and moral point of reference in education, youth and community facilities may not be experienced as overt by many secular people or by people within the Churches. But it was seen as pervasive by several participants, who felt excluded by it from participation in village life or from becoming part of the community identity.

Church influence on rural life and education, and impact on people of other Faiths

- ☞ *Less emphasis on the church - i.e C of E and Methodist Church and C of E school - would help to improve life. [Jewish participant]*
- ☞ *The school is good but C of E. [Muslim participant]*
- ☞ *There are lots of local activities based around the church – the local Guildswomen, the Mother’s Union, the Women’s Institute, but I can’t join because I’m Jewish.*
- ☞ *I don’t feel like I’ve been accepted in the community in the sheltered housing. I have made it plain that I’m Jewish to stop Anti-Semitism. I don’t feel part of the community because I moved here late in life and I don’t have anything in common with the residents - there’s nothing to talk about. All the people talk about is illness. The conversation in the lounge is all about the Methodist Church and I feel really out of it.*
- ☞ *My son keeps coming home talking about Jesus all the time which is a bit worrying. I don’t want him to be sucked into church life. My kids say they’re not being taught about other religions - they did cover Divali, but the kids didn’t come back talking about it so I don’t think they covered it in much detail. [Asian British participant, no Faith group]*
- ☞ *Pictures of Jesus are too Europeanized [Arab participant]*

Fear of racist prejudice and religious intolerance having impact on community relations and expression of identity

The sense of ethnic and religious isolation and exposure in rural communities is confirmed and increased for those people who experienced racism and prejudice within their own local community, and whose ethnic identity was very much shaped by religious identity. In chapter 6 we see that the majority of participants were subject to hostility in particular in public, neighbourhood and education settings. Some Jewish participants talked about responding to this experience and to awareness of religiously intolerant attitudes by keeping their religious identity concealed, with the attendant feeling of having identity driven underground. In chapter 6 we also see how many people cope with racism by trying to conform to cultural norms and codes in order to be seen to fit in, and not as 'different'. For some participants the outcome is also the need not to be seen to practice a religion and not to attend a place of worship for fear of attracting animosity - A kind of attempt to lose colour in the public eye by losing the cultural markers of religion.

Racial prejudice experienced from Churches

- ☞ *I once went to church in [the village] but during all the service the priest stared at me as if to say 'who is this stranger'. I worried I smelled or had a dirty mouth - I was very embarrassed. The Priest didn't come and talk to me. It made me feel very uncomfortable. It put me off going to church ever again.*
- ☞ *A licensed preacher refuses to use our names, and accused us at a local community function of "being professional scroungers".*

Impact of prejudice on expression of identity

- ☞ *Practicing my Faith [Jewish] is demanding because of reactions to it. I rarely tell people about my being Jewish. Anti-Semitism is alive and well in Devon.*
- ☞ *I would not reveal my religion to my neighbours who I believe are racist/ Anti-Semitic and they do tend to be keen church goers!!*

Inter- and intra- faith tensions

We have already noted that tensions that were experienced by participants living in villages whose infrastructure was perceived as exclusively Christian in religious outlook, and by people experiencing inter-cultural friction within their Faith groups. In addition, the research also picked up on inter-faith tensions and attitudes of inter-religious intolerance. The way in which people interpreted the conflict in the Middle East was a source of this tension, as were understandings of religious texts such as the Bible and the Koran. One participant also described the sense of cultural assault experienced by a friend when Christians attempted to use a process of interfaith dialogue as an opportunity for making conversions.

The comments which flagged inter-religious prejudice up, most of which are not printed here, raise questions for all Faith organisations – in terms of developing good race relations among people of different cultures *within* their Faith community, and in terms of building good race relations *between* people of different Faiths. Some participants also commented on the difficulty of overcoming inter-religious tensions, and their fear of challenging religious peers when they hear intolerant or inflammatory comments, because of their fear of having their commitment to their cultural identity challenged.

Race relations work within Faiths is also an important ingredient for the overall external promotion of race equality in wider society:

- As argued in chapter 12 most race equality work needs to happen through multi-cultural networks if it is to be viable. This work will therefore depend on such networks being able to cope with religious diversity within the group dynamic.
- Although it is unreasonable, the Minority Ethnic population is often popularly perceived as a single entity and, in the face of much insensitivity to race equality in Devon, the Minority Ethnic population needs to be able to work harmoniously in order to engage service providers' positive attention.
- With a large captive audience, the Christian Churches in the UK have an important opportunity to convey the values and principles of racial equality and cultural diversity to their congregations. The impact they could have on changing and leading public attitudes could be immense. However, the issues touched upon in this research indicate the need for Churches to examine the unwitting messages that their cultural roles in the community communicate.

Interfaith tensions and relationships

- ☞ *I used to be Muslim. It was a big argument at the time of my marriage that my husband was Christian. So we both decided to give up our religions. Religion is the biggest argument worldwide. We didn't want our kids to be given a one-sided religion because it would lead to one side of the family being ignored. So we chose no religion. But the kids explore religion in school and we explore them together. People hide behind religion now for good and bad reasons. When we dropped it my Mum didn't accept the decision. She keeps giving me the Koran and so on to take home. My husband's Mum gives him the Bible. We put them safely away. Both sets of parents tried to argue over our kids' religion. My parents think I live in a hippy commune in Devon. My family rely on religion as a way of life. But I can still turn to them for support.*
- ☞ *The Koran says trust Christians but not Jews.*
- ☞ *Some say there's no anti-Semitism and that's because people are doing their Judaism in 'safe places' - the synagogue or at the parties. This shows just how unsafe being a Jew is in Devon. There was a church that joined the Council of Christians and Jews with the agenda to convert the Jews. One friend was lured into a meeting where the Christians tried to convert her. It really upset her.....*
- ☞ *I couldn't say what I think about the behaviour of Israel at the moment in front of my mother's family because they're very pro Israeli. I'm worried that the Middle East situation could get much worse and also the situation for Muslims is terrible too - they're seen as mad extremists.*

Role of Faith centres in addressing the support needs of isolated people.

Faiths were also revealed in the research as being important sources of support and connection with the external community. In chapters 5 & 6 we look at the layers of isolation affecting many Black and Minority Ethnic people, and at the sources of support people have recourse to, to overcome isolation. With the role of Faith being so intertwined with identity, spiritual and emotional fortitude and with pastoral concern, Faiths are critically positioned to be a first port of call for support - provided that Faith

communities are perceived as accessible by those who need them. Just as health practitioners also deal with people at critical points in their lives and provide opportunity for confidential discussion (see chapter 10), Faith workers also have privilege to relationships in this way, and provide a potentially unique opportunity for a person in crisis to expose vulnerability and seek help. Without being aware of this role, and without proactively developing relationships with Black and Minority Ethnic people, Faith workers run the risk of cutting off a crucial avenue of support.

Role of Church (met and unmet) as a source of support

- *Support from the Church was thing that helped me stay [here]. You need to make sure that all churches provide that kind of affection and support.*
- *I used to blame God for why I can't do things – reading and running. I stopped blaming him when I went back to [Africa] but I still didn't find happiness inside until I went to a Spring Harvest festival and heard a preacher who did a stunt asking people if they wanted a £20 note and kept asking them if they wanted it even when he had made it dirty and ripped it to bits. He said God still wants you whatever you've been through or whether you're Black or White. It made me start to think. Then when I moved to Devon and went to the [Christian Community] Church in [town] with my aunt, I saw very happy young people there and Christianity began to hit home personally. [Disabled participant]*
- *I was a good Christian but I don't go to church now because I have the court access visits to my daughter on Sundays. My mother is Protestant. I don't go to church for the congregation. I just go for the inspiration of the service. Some people are friendly. But the world has been turned upside down - I've been battered here and there and there's no stabilizing force.*
- *It was very difficult to settle in the town. The only point of contact was the church*

Diffidence about opting in from the outside/ feeling on the outside

- ☞ *I thought of going to a Catholic church in town but I heard it has a bad reputation. But I feel it's important to be able to go to Church when you have kids.*
- ☞ *We go to church but don't get involved. We're very busy and don't like to get involved with organisations. I would like to help with Church bazaars and the elderly if I had time.*
- ☞ *People at Church reacted badly when I tried to improve Church porch – I tried to get involved too soon.*
- ☞ *I went one or two times to church here. I am Catholic, but the service is in English and my bible is in French. So it's no good*
- ☞ *I am Catholic. But I also don't understand the service in English. I just stand up and sit down with everyone else.*
- ☞ *I was born Catholic but don't go to church - I find it too stressful because my husband doesn't - I have to do things on my own. I pray in my own time and talk to my son about God. The school is Faith-based. We go at Christmas time to the village Church. Where you worship is shaped by human intervention. Religious unity means it doesn't matter where you worship. I had a feeling of alienation from the Church from my upbringing at convent school. So I don't want to be involved in religion.*
- ☞ *I'm Catholic but don't often go to church now after we had a bad experience with the parish priest because he was drunk when he did our son's baptism. We were hoping for vibrancy at Church, but here the local Catholic church is very boring. Church and education should be a celebration – not boring. The Church tends to lock you down. We both have a very spiritual outlook and need to do something about finding a Faith outlet.*
- ☞ *I'm scared of churches because I'm scared of death. The other day I thought about going into one but I was too afraid. [You need social events/networks] to learn about where the churches are that cater for cultural sensitivity.*

Access to Jewish community for elderly and rurally isolated Jews

- 🗨️ *Even the synagogue in Exeteris very lacking. I have emailed suggestions but they don't encompass people outside the Exeter area. I can't drive to Exeter because there's nowhere to park [disability access] and in the evening it's too dark. The social activities are very limited and only apply to Exeter. I have offered to host coffee mornings or bridge parties and asked them to advertise this, but the synagogue hasn't done anything.*
- 🗨️ *I don't attend synagogue. I'm not religious but I am proud of the Jewish Faith and I tell everyone. I did get a contact for a Jewish family in a neighbouring town from the Synagogue and rang them to ask for a lift to Synagogue but they never rang me back - young people are not interested in the elderly.*

This handbook and supporting tools ✖ can be accessed at www.DevonREC.org