Faiths, Equalities & Sexual Orientation: an exploratory study

Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw

Abstract

This piece of research was funded by Capacity Builders and commissioned by MENTER, as the lead body of the regional VCS Equalities Group (VEG), in consultation with the East of England Faiths Council (EEFC) and Julie Cartwright-Finch to review the current body of knowledge in relation to faiths and equalities and to set this within the context of some of the local experiences of people of faith in the Eastern region.

Through a process of literature reviewing, a short questionnaire and focus groups, the research has made three main findings: first, that some people of faith find the equalities agenda threatening to their values and ethos and therefore to their practices in community based social action, especially as that relates to working with lesbian, gay and bisexual people; second, that this obscures an engagement with the equalities agenda which could otherwise make the most of what it shares in terms of a commitment to social justice and human fulfilment; and third, that a process of active education is required to recast the 'threat' perception in the direction of a 'social justice' approach, as well as to 'surface' and resolve differences in relation to sexual orientation, accepting that resolution might result in dissent.

The report recommends that such a programme of education be developed in partnership between a working group of people of faith and public policy partners. This would be supported by a programme of research which takes the initial findings from this study to explore them in the differential contexts of each tradition.

PART ONE: CONTEXTS & METHODS

Context

In late 2008 the regional VCS Equalities Group (VEG) received funding from Capacity Builders, through the Improving Reach Programme, to commission research which would address gaps in evidence in the East of England around the equality strands. One identified area of research was the potential tension between some faith communities and their views on the sexual orientation protected characteristic, which in 2007 became part of the new equalities framework. This paper reports on the process, design, methods, and findings of this work.

The research aim was to produce a comprehensive review of the existing literature on faith groups' engagement with issues relating to sexual orientation, situated within the equalities framework. The literature review includes a broad sweep of sources, acknowledging that little has been published explicitly on this topic using equalities to frame discussion.

We also aimed to supplement the literature review with conversations with people of faith. The original aim was to hold six focus groups, one in each of the counties of the East of England, to engage faith groups in an exploration of the ways in which they incorporate an understanding of equalities in their social action initiatives and the impact this has, if any, on developing initiatives for working with people of minority sexual orientation in particular. Though fewer than six were in fact conducted, (see methods, below), the focus groups draw out the challenges and issues faith groups face in relation to conceptualising their work in terms of equalities, as defined in UK law, and meeting developments under this rubric.

Aims and Objectives

The research is intended as a pilot to inform further work across the UK and aims to provide an initial reflective evidence base on faith groups and sexual orientation set within an equalities framework to inform:

a. Effective development of strategy, policy and project initiatives for the region by the VSEG and others
b. Targeted grant-funding allocations for this area of equalities work in the East of England

Through the engagement process we have aimed to:
c. Open a conversation with faith groups on responses to equalities and particularly to themes around sexual orientation
d. Identify examples of good practice already in existence among faith groups

Dissemination of the research outcomes through this project report
aims to:

e. Identify the VSEG as a leader in developing work of this kind through effective partnership working
f. Create an appetite and agenda for ongoing research in this area
g. Offer a pilot that can inform further work across the UK

What we did - Methods

The main body of the work has been to conduct a review of the literature relating to faiths and equalities. As the report will show, there is a paucity of research in this area and what we have done is to draw together the wider literature relating to issues which the equalities framework raises, especially in relation to sexual orientation, in order to identify both the wider context in which equalities work with faiths must take place and the very significant gaps in the research base.

We have supplemented this with 'conversations with people of faith'. It had been envisaged that this would entail up to six focus groups, one in each of the counties in the Eastern region. It is emblematic of the limited capacity of faith groups at the same time as enormous demands being placed on them as policy interest extends more and more in their direction that we revised our original ambitions and held two larger groups instead of six smaller ones. In this we followed the advice of our partner, the East of England Faiths Council, whose view it was that six groups would be practically impossible to convene in the timetable envisaged because of other activities in the region that had arisen since the framing of the original proposal.

Our 'conversations' involved participation in two sub-regional one day events focused on governance training for community leaders of faith groups. These included input from the research team about the equalities legislation, with time for general questioning. This was followed by specific one hour smaller group 'discussion sets' in which participants were invited to discuss issues in a semi-structured format concerning their views and concerns about the equalities framework. They were asked to consider the opportunities, obstacles and challenges as they saw them. These conversations were observed by non-participant observers who acted as note takers. All conversations and locations have been fully analysed. Analysis has been conducted using a process of theme identification. Findings are reported later in this report.

The Religion and Belief Strand

Though the main focus of the project has been faiths and sexual orientation, some unexpected concerns emerged about the impacts of new duties against discrimination on the basis of 'religion and belief'. The main issue in this area was how the legislation is experienced as a threat to the faith identity of faith groups, some of which fear being 'forced' to employ people of other faiths and none, provide them with services and, in the processes, diluting the ethos of the 'host' or 'home' faith tradition. A second concern was about the dilution of the public contribution of 'faith' by 'belief' by associating them with secularism and humanism, which usually argue against a public role for faith. These issues are not the focus of this report but their emergence suggests that this is an important area for further research and consideration.

A Note on Balance

This is a contested and sensitive area as our findings show and it has often generated heated debate and argument. We would urge readers of the report to set this within a wider context in which many people and groups of faith are working very positively with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. At the same time, in the equalities arena the issues identified here are very important and the challenges are great. It appears that there is a great deal of work to be done to educate and illuminate positive debate, including finding ways of breeching dissent. Nevertheless the report should not be taken as evidence that faiths are widely and/or uniformly homophobic or negative about LGBT people and lives. Anecdotally we know of a number of faith based projects working in this area and it could be beneficial to pursue case studies of some of these as part of further research.

PART TWO: The Equalities Framework

Some starting points

The idea of equality has come to be located as a central issue in social justice and since the 1970's has found expression in a range of legislative measures and policy guidelines (see below).

Since 1997, the equalities dimension has been given renewed impetus through a combination of government's stated commitment to social justice, the implementation of the Human Rights Act (1998) and an additional directive emerging from the European Union.

At the same time, the UK government has developed an explicit interest in the role of faith communities in civil society which it sees, at least in part, as "gateways to access the tremendous reserves of energy and commitment of their members, which can be of great importance to the development of civil society" (Home Office 2004:7). This presents both challenges and opportunities for a robust engagement between faiths and government. Whatever the rights and wrongs, (and they are seriously contested, see Furbey at al 2006), it also demands of faith communities their 'professional-isation' as partners across the sectors which make up 'civil society', and a key dimension of this is the approach they take to equalities. Aside from the current government agenda for faith communities, this issue is of increasing importance to them in any case, both as a question of social justice and in terms of the legal requirements and protections which are imposed.

There are eleven key pieces of legislation which make up the context for equalities policy in the UK and one European Union Directive. They are (in chronological order):

- The Equal Pay Act (1970)
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)
- The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) [and amended 2000]
- The Race Relations Act (1976) [and amended 2000]
- The Disability Discrimination Act (1997)
- The Human Rights Act (1998)
- The European Union Employment Framework Directive on Religion or Belief [2000]
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003)
- The Gender Recognition Act (2004)
- The Equality Act (2006) establishes the Commission on Equalities and Human Rights (EHRC), a new integrated equalities body covering sex, race, disability, criminal offending, religion/belief and sexual orientation; and introduces new age discrimination regulations as well as prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of religion & belief and sexual orientation

(2007) in the provision of goods, facilities and services, in education and in the exercise of public functions.

Three of these measures address themselves specifically to issues of faith and religious belief (the European Union Employment Framework Directive on Religion or Belief [2000] and the UK Employment Equality [Religion or Belief] Regulations [2003], which implements it, and the Equality Act 2006). But there are implications in many of the other measures too. This means that the implications of each Act or Regulation, and of the overall framework, are not necessarily immediately clear. This section attempts to draw out the key implications and issues. (Please note, this is NOT a legal briefing but an assessment of the implications of equalities policies for faith communities. For information and advice on legal matters professional legal staff should be consulted).

Problems of Perspective

As a starting point, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are difficulties because the equalities framework is complex in itself, diffused as it is across a wide range of policy instruments.

In addition, it is also associated with a range of concerns. At first glance, the primary focus is on equalities in employment. But another perspective concentrates on wider issues of discrimination against minority and oppressed groups. Thus the focus is variously on gender, sexual orientation, race, offending and religion or belief. A third focus may be understood as chiefly associated with rights, as in the case of the Human Rights Act (1998). This area does not seek to protect specific groups so much as to confer rights fully and equally to all.

Having said this, it is also the case that equalities policy is an inter-related mesh of measures and, though analytically useful, it is artificial to attempt to separate them. Thus the gender, sexual orientation, race, disability and religion or belief measures are not only about employment, for example, though they have serious implications in that area, as in others.

At the same time, individuals almost always stand in several or many places simultaneously in relation to the issues described, sometimes as employers, at others as employees, perhaps as part of minority or oppressed groups themselves, occasionally even as oppressors. At other times they may seek to work as promoters of rights. This applies to faith communities as well as to individuals and other groupings and may be described as the 'multiple perspectives dilemma'.

From the various perspectives of people of faith, the protections offered in law to minorities and the oppressed may sometimes appear just as much as challenges to their own perspectives and beliefs and this research has encountered this as a key issue, as the findings will show. This makes the identification of implications for faith communities all the more complex as

they depend, to some considerable degree, upon the perspective from which one starts.

This is capable of further complication in relation to the diverse moral, ethical and theological standpoints to which people and communities of faith may be variously committed, some of which may cut against the trend of equalities legislation (though much is likely to support it).

It should also be noted that there is much diversity within faith groups themselves and most religious groups include a variety of denominations, traditions, practices and beliefs, people of various ethnic origins and cultures, people with disabilities, people from a variety of social backgrounds, people of all ages and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender perspectives. Homogeneity of perspective is unlikely or impossible, therefore.

Bearing this in mind, this section takes each of the three perspectives identified as a starting point:

- Employment
- Wider discrimination against minority and oppressed groups
- Rights

The key pieces of legislation are briefly described and a summary is given. This is followed by a practical discussion of the implications and issues for faith communities as they pertain to that particular perspective.

In addition, we include a section which addresses the question of multiple perspectives, identified above. This considers faith communities from the perspectives of their various activities and roles in addition to employment, and explores the legislation and regulations accordingly. These perspectives understand faith communities in terms of:

- Education
- Grant-making
- Services
- Access and participation

As for moral, ethical and theological perspectives, it is left to the various faith communities, and their members, to infer the specific implications for themselves from the general ones outlined here. To consider detailed ramifications and challenges from the perspectives of each faith, and in terms which take into account moral, ethical and theological factors, is an enormous undertaking of a theological as well as a policy nature, and is therefore considerably (and regrettably) beyond the remit of this report. Nevertheless, a brief discussion of the general issues in this regard is given towards the end.

This is followed by a summary which identifies some key issues and possible actions for faith communities arising from the equalities frameworks identified.

It is intended that this section, and the literature review which follows, along with the issues it raises, be considered as the first step in an iterative process toward developing understanding in this area and mechanisms for its dissemination amongst faith communities. Therefore responses to it, and comments, suggestions and critiques, are welcomed.

Three Equalities Clusters

1. Faiths, Equalities and Employment

Employment is a key preoccupation of the equalities legislation since this is an area in which the private and the public spheres meet, and which fundamentally affects a very broad number and range of people. According to most governments, and particularly New Labour, it is both a right and a responsibility that people should work and employment is therefore an area of fundamental concern to public policy.

Employment equalities policy is relevant in a number of ways according to the role and perspective taken. This report identifies five key areas of concern for faith communities, as follows:

- Recruitment
- Pay and conditions
- Access
- Discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief or sexual orientation
- Discrimination at work on grounds of crime and offending
- 'Genuine occupational requirements' (GORs)

There is also an important question concerning the issue of exclusions which is also addressed, below. These measures are contained in the following legislation and regulations:

Source: The Equality Standard for Local Government (2004)

Measure	Description
The Equal Pay Act (1970)	Gives an individual a right to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where both are doing: • Like work • Work rated as equivalent • Work that is proved to be of equal value The employer will not be required to provide the same pay or benefits if it can prove that the difference in pay or benefits are genuinely due to a

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	reason other than one related to the sex of the employee.
The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)	Enables criminal convictions to become 'spent' or ignored after a rehabilitation period. After this period, with certain exceptions, an ex-offender is normally not obliged to mention their conviction when applying for a job, obtaining insurance or when involved in criminal or civil proceedings. (nb this does NOT apply to enhanced Criminal Records Bureau ['Police'] Checks).
The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) [and amended 2000]	Prohibits sex discrimination against individuals in employment. (This also extends to education and provision of goods, facilities and services and in the disposal or management of premises. See below.) It also prohibits discrimination in employment against married people. It is NOT unlawful to discriminate against someone because they are unmarried. There are also special provisions prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment in the employment field, with certain exceptions.
The Race Relations Act (1976) [and amended 2000]	Prohibits discrimination, direct or indirect, on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origin. In addition, all public bodies must eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations. Local authorities have a specific duty to publish a Race Equality Scheme and monitor human resources procedures and practices in terms of race. Through case law, this measure considers Sikhs and Jews to be 'races' and these faiths are subject to the provisions of the Act.

The Disability Discrimination Act (1997)	Aims to end the discrimination which many disabled people face by giving people with physical or mental impairment protections against discrimination, direct or indirect, in employment. (This also extends to access to goods, facilities and services and buying or renting land or property. See below.)
The European Union Employment Framework Directive on Religion or Belief [2000]	This outlaws discrimination in employment and vocational training on the grounds of religion or belief.
Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)	This outlaws discrimination in employment and vocational training on the grounds of sexual orientation.
Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003)	This implements the European Union Employment Framework Directive on Religion or Belief and outlaws discrimination in employment and vocational training on the grounds of religion or belief.

Other measures impinge upon the work place but go more widely and are addressed in terms of wider discrimination (below). In terms of employment in particular, the issues are as follows.

Recruitment

The recruitment of staff and volunteers is a key starting point for equalities policy relating to employment since it is in the choice of staff and volunteers that there is the greatest potential for discrimination and inequality on the part of employers (whether intentionally or otherwise). This might relate as much to the institutionalisation of inequality, through unrepresentative workforce demographics, as to the sort of direct discrimination which is often more visible.

Best practice relating to recruitment generally is well established across the sectors and many (or most) organisations have policies for recruitment. A common procedure is the introduction of a job specification and person specification against which candidates are asked to demonstrate their competence which is judged, in these terms, by a panel which identifies all those who apply, regardless of personal background. This is intended to ensure a fair assessment of the best person for the job, irrespective of the personal and subjective perspectives of employers. It is also common practice for personal details forms to be detachable from the remainder of applications so that assessors work only with the criteria for successful engagement with the job and not with personal factors. (For an example of best practice, see Ahmed et al 2006).

In general terms, the principles which apply to recruitment in relation to equalities are:

- that no person should be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, race, 'spent' offences, disability, sexual orientation or religion/belief
- public bodies should endeavour to monitor recruitment practices and outcomes to ensure non-discrimination.
- It may be desirable for employers to promote equalities in recruitment through policy making which supports it, though not where positive discrimination results in unlawful negative discrimination against another group

For faith communities in particular, there are a number of additional specific issues which may arise. The most obvious is concerned with Holy Days and religious festivals and employers should avoid inviting candidates to events, for example interviews and open days, on such dates. This extends to practical issues such as the timing of interviews and other events which should take into consideration religious observances such as diet, prayer times and ablutionary needs. This may mean making available options in food and refreshments and possibly prayer and wash rooms. These should be provided in such a way as to be equally available to those that require them as other provisions are to their peers (for example, it may be inappropriate for food to be provided in a separate room where this might prejudice candidates' experience of or engagement with the process).

In addition there are issues associated with employment status, volunteering and vocation. Here there has been debate about the status of holders of religious offices, such as Priests, who are in one sense employees but who have also sometimes been described in other terms. For example, the Church of England describes its Priests as receiving 'stipends' rather than being paid a wage and this is an expression of debate about the employment status of some in faith communities. Selection criteria may lack transparency or reflect theological positions which require justification in terms of equalities law, for example where women or gay people are excluded from certain roles (see below). Faith based organisations need to be clear in how they understand themselves in relation to this and develop operational policies which reflect this understanding and are within the law.

This may apply, too, to volunteers for whom employment status may be, at best, ambivalent. Good practice in this area generally is for the recruitment of volunteers to follow similar or equivalent procedures as used for staff.

Pay and conditions

Another key issue in equalities policy is equal pay for men and women. The legislation, in common with much law, uses ambivalent language in its attempt to capture something which is somewhat complex. The principles are that men and women in the same employment should receive the same pay where both are doing:

- 'Like work'
- Work rated as equivalent
- Work that is proved to be of equal value

In general terms these tests are sometimes difficult to establish and a system of tribunals is in place to hear contested cases. In particular, 'like' or 'equivalent' work is subject to often intense debate, and 'proof of equal value' is potentially very difficult to establish.

For faith communities in particular, there are often issues associated with the relative positions and roles of men and women which may be embedded in theological perspectives and commitments. Clearly these may be somewhat sensitive and complex areas for some and it is necessary to treat this with care but also to formulate clear organisational policies which address the legislative and regulatory frameworks, even (or especially) where they seek exclusions from them.

A key issue for some faith groups is the relationship between 'professional' and 'lay' participants. For example, many faiths operate with structures in which leaders and certain officers are paid for their work whilst others are not. This is particularly stark in some of the Christian churches where there is sometimes a strong distinction drawn between the 'professional' and the 'volunteer'. It is likely to be the case that volunteer roles are acceptable in terms of pay policy in equalities terms since people enter into them in that knowledge and because the roles are often distinct. This is not always the case and the example of non-stipendiary ministers may bear consideration (though would be likely to be treated for these purposes as employment). Indeed, many volunteers are now issued with contracts or sometimes learning/practice agreements which regulate their relationship with the organisation in which they work. Again, this is best practice and should also operate within a wider context of clear intra-organisational policies on the matter.

A more complex distinction may be between the clergy and the laity, where pastoral, liturgical and other roles might sometimes appear blurred. Faith communities should be aware of the potential for confusion or ambivalence here and if possible publish a statement of their position which addresses the law.

Faith communities need to beware, too, of discrimination within and between congregations and worshipping communities where there are representative structures and mechanisms which support their involvement in decisions about who to employ and/or work with. An example is the selection panels for Church of England clergy in parishes. Another increasing area for this kind of public participation is in the area of community participation, through partnership boards, local strategic partnerships, neighbourhood panels and community planning in local authorities. Often faith communities are asked to join such forum and their perspectives and choices need to reflect equalities policy. Appropriate training is often advisable.

A further dimension concerns conditions, of contract and in the workplace, and is associated with the rights and needs of people of faith to practice at work. The Greater London Authority's Faith Equality Scheme (GLA 2005) is an effective example in this regard and identifies five key issues:

- Dress code
- Religious observance
- Leave for religious festivals
- Sudden and/or extended ('extraordinary') leave (for example, where funerals are expected to take place as soon as possible after death and/or may be some distance away, as may be likely with second and third generation minority faith communities)
- Dietary requirements

It is advisable that employers devise policies which respond to these issues. But employees may wish to take responsibility too for informing employers of specific issues arising in relation to them in advance where possible (though it is not a requirement that employees disclose religious affiliation or belief). Some local authorities have published a 'Faith Guide' to all staff to inform them of the various observances and perspectives of the major faiths with this intention in mind (for example, Huntingdonshire District Council).

Significantly more difficult to address are subtle forms of discrimination such as those involved with taking career breaks, working as a volunteer, being ill or disabled (temporarily or in the longer-term) and taking responsibility for child care. These are factors which disproportionately affect women, in terms of pay, career trajectory and pensions. It should be acknowledged that these are issues in wider society and not just particular to faith groups, though an interest in social justice on the one hand and the sometimes relatively subjugated role of women on the other may act as levers for or against equality amongst faith communities and it may be helpful for them to consider these issues and devise appropriate policies or position statements in response.

It should also be noted that there are some employment roles which are actively closed to some groups in faith communities, such as women Bishops in the Church of England and Catholic Christian churches and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in many instances. These are issues which are likely increasingly to arise as the Employment Regulations on Sexual Orientation and on Religion/Belief are enforced and there has been considerable anecdotal speculation that cases may be bought to the European Court of Human Rights, particularly in relation to sexual orientation. Their resolution may depend on the 'expert evidence' of Theologians where a theological basis is claimed. It will be most interesting to follow how the contestability within theological traditions plays out in legal contexts.

Access

The question of access refers both to physical access to buildings and to opportunities for participation within faith communities, both as employees and as volunteers. The first is associated primarily with the Disability Discrimination Act (1997) which applies the criteria-based approach to recruitment and employment for people with disabilities, as for people without disabilities.

In addition it requires that buildings and other facilities be modified in order that people with disabilities be able to access them. This is sometimes an issue of great concern for those faith groups which have a tradition of very old and often listed buildings, often of historical importance and frequently of such a construction as to make alterations costly and time-consuming. There are exceptions for some such buildings and faith communities should take legal advice on these matters. On the other hand there has developed an expertise in handling these matters sensitively and with care (for case study examples see Finneron and Dinham 2002).

Often physical access constrains the participation of people with disabilities in any community and efforts should be made to address this. But their participation may also be impeded by other, non-physical factors, such as attitudes and prejudices. This can lead to different people developing different expectations about the capabilities, skills and even desires of people with disabilities to take part and can result, unintentionally, in their exclusion. This, too, may be an issue for training or the development of a clearly articulated policy.

Discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief or sexual orientation

This is a sensitive and interesting pair of measures which have both explicit and implicit ramifications for faith communities. These are located in the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003) and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003). The key principles are that it is unlawful to discriminate in terms of employment in any of the following ways:

- Discriminate indirectly or directly against anyone, that is, to apply a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular religion/belief or sexual orientation without a good reason (GOR)
- Subject someone to harassment. Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them
- Victimise someone because they have made a complaint or allegation or have given evidence against someone else in relation to a complaint or discrimination on the grounds of religion/belief or sexual orientation
  [Source: Greater London Authority Faith Equality Scheme 2004]

These measures thus outlaw discrimination in employment on the grounds of religion or belief and on the grounds of sexual orientation, meaning that

neither a person's faith nor their sexuality may be taken into consideration as factors discriminating against their recruitment, pay and conditions, conduct (except where actions may be construed as misconduct by any other standard) or any other dimension of their employment.

In terms of religion or belief, the first point to note is how widely the definitions go. The Regulations themselves describe religion or belief as "any religion, religious belief, or similar philosophical belief". Thus 'religion' may refer to the nine faiths recognised in the UK for their statistical significance in the census (Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian) though it may also extend further. The category of 'belief' in any case extends the idea of faith almost indefinitely and employers may wish to be clear what they mean by these words, taking legal advice if necessary. Though the Regulations state that "this does not include any philosophical belief unless it is similar to religious belief", it is probably a matter for case law (as yet untested) how the parameters emerge and certain assertions of need within employment as a result of stated 'belief' may be challenged by employers (and eventually by courts).

Clearly for many (though by no means all) faith based organisations, the question of a person's faith is likely to be significant to the role they are applying to perform and in these instances it might be appropriate to state a positive preference or requirement (see the section on General Occupational Requirements, below). A common sense perspective suggests that it is unlikely that somebody will seek a position which they do not actually want, (though this should not be assumed). The question of when it might be appropriate to state the faith of a person required should be clearly understood and articulated within the faith community, however, and a policy devised.

The question of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation may be rather more difficult for some faith communities, especially where there are strong feelings, debated perspectives and/or theological, moral and ethical positions in relation to sexual orientation (as is the case in many faith communities). The law requires that these are debates which must be resolved since, where faith communities act as employers, and/or providers of goods and services, they may not discriminate on these grounds and can be challenged if perceived to do so.

Conversely there may be organisations which positively seek people of certain sexual orientations to perform certain roles, such as may be the case in certain counselling services for gay men, for example. This is permissible under certain circumstances relating to 'genuine occupational requirements' (see below).

Discrimination in employment on grounds of crime and offending

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) enables criminal convictions to become 'spent', meaning that they can be ignored after a rehabilitation period. After this period (with certain exceptions) an ex-offender is not normally

obliged to mention their conviction when applying for a job (nor when applying for insurance or when involved in criminal or civil proceedings). This means that where faith communities act as employers they need not be informed of candidate's spent convictions.

A key exception is where candidates are applying to work with children or vulnerable adults. In this case an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check should be carried out and any spent convictions will be disclosed. Faith communities may wish to devise policies which reflect their position in these circumstances since, unless forbidden by inclusion on the Sex Offenders Register, any decision about employment subsequent to disclosure of a spent conviction is at the discretion of the employer. It may be advisable to have a process for deciding such cases which takes into account the letter and the spirit of the equalities legislation and regulations.

Genuine Occupational Requirements (GORs)

Genuine Occupational Requirements (GORs) apply to both the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003) and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003). This means that it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds either of religion or belief or on the grounds of sexual orientation unless it can be shown that there is a 'genuine occupational requirement'.

Thus, where an organisation has an ethos based on religion or belief, it may be able to apply a genuine occupational reason exclusion by demonstrating that such a religion or belief is a requirement to carry out a particular job, for example being a Priest or a Muslim Outreach Worker. In this case it would not be regarded as discrimination but as an occupational requirement.

Similarly, where an organisation can demonstrate that a certain sexual orientation is a requirement to carry out a particular job, for example being a Gay Men's Youth Worker; it would also not be regarded as discrimination but as an occupational requirement.

There is potential for these two measures to conflict with one another where faith communities seek to argue that certain sexual orientations are excluded on theological grounds, and therefore, since the theological may be argued to be part of the job, this may become an 'occupational' issue in terms of employment law. Faith communities are well aware of the sensitivity of this ground from a number of perspectives and experience, including case law, is likely to contribute to a resolution of at least some of these issues. In the meantime, faith communities should consider their positions in relation to these questions and develop policies (and where appropriate, training) which responds to the law.

2. Faiths and Wider Discrimination against Minority and Oppressed Groups

As well as in the area of employment, equalities policy extends protections and responsibilities to certain aspects of the social more widely. Since, for these purposes, work is within the scope of the social, these apply in the work place, as indicated, above. But they also have applications beyond, in the following areas:

- Gender
- Race
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Religion & belief

The greatest risk to equalities in relation to these wider provisions is where faith communities take a specific theological, moral or ethical position as part of their systems of belief and practice, some of which may contradict what the law requires. Whilst it is arguable that diversity of view or practice should apply as much to faith communities as to minority groups, it is also the case that the law prohibits certain perspectives from being expressed in terms of employment, education and the provision of services and facilities.

The conflicts which sometimes arise as a result may be a significant source of discomfort at times and faith communities and others have frequently shown themselves able to consider their positions in advance of such conflicts and with caution and sensitivity. It is advisable, in the new frameworks, that they prepare by developing clear policies which respond to the law and state their positions explicitly, including in relation to any exemptions which they may wish to seek.

Sex & Gender

In terms of sex, the Sex Discrimination Act (1975 and amended 2000) complements the employment focus of the Equal Pay Act (1970) by prohibiting discrimination against individuals in the additional areas of education and the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the disposal or management of premises. It also prohibits discrimination in employment against married people.

Faith communities need to be mindful of this in their role as trainers and in terms of staff, volunteer and congregational development to ensure that men and women are given equal opportunity to engage in any educational activities which might be appropriate and available. This applies, equally, to goods, facilities and services, so that faith communities should be aware that any provisions they make (for example in terms of 'social responsibility' work in communities) be indiscriminately available to both sexes.

In addition, in terms of gender, the Gender Recognition Act (2004) for the first time gives legal recognition to transsexual people in their acquired gender who have satisfied the Gender Recognition Panel which has been established for these purposes. A key outcome is that transsexual people who have satisfied the panel are able to have their acquired gender recognised on their

birth certificates and passports. This measure does not in itself protect against discrimination on the grounds of transsexuality, though the Sex Discrimination Act (1975 and amended 2000) makes special provisions prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment in the employment field, (with certain exceptions). This means that faith communities need not be informed of any previous gender status of any person with whom they come into contact and where they are the employer of a person of reassigned gender, they may not discriminate against them.

Race

Similarly, the Race Relations Act (1976 and amended 2000) prohibits discrimination (directly or indirectly) on the grounds of colour, and ethnic or racial origin. This form of discrimination has generally been well-educated against but it has come to be understood as persistent in terms of institutional discrimination or racism. This means that black and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented in positions of power and influence and in terms of wealth, whilst overrepresented in indices of deprivation and poverty. This may be something faith communities wish to address in their wider approach to equalities thinking as an issue of social justice. This might relate to employment, provision of services and the promotion of equality through anti-discriminatory measures across the board of their activities. (A model for this is in professional Social Work, see for example Dalrymple and Burke 2001). It might also inform decisions to direct charitable work and/or funds towards oppressed groups.

Disability

This applies, too, to disability, as discussed in the section on access (above). In addition, the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) provides guidance on examples of reasonable adjustments which may be made in response to this measure:

- Adjusting premises to facilitate disabled employees
- Reallocating some of a disabled employee's duties to someone else
- Altering a disabled person's hours of work
- Providing a reader or interpreter
- Giving time off for therapy, rehabilitation or treatment
- Modifying instructions and reference manuals
- Modifying procedures for testing or assessment
- Assigning a disabled employee to a different place of work
- Transferring the disabled employee with their agreement to fill an existing vacancy

[Source: NCVO 1997]

Sexual orientation and religion & belief

As well as protections in the field of employment, new protections on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion & belief are contained in the Equality Act 2006 and the accompanying Sexual Orientation (2007)

Regulations. These include a power that allows the government to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion & belief and sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, in education and in the exercise of public functions. There are certain exceptions granted to religious organisations, which allow them to restrict the provision of certain goods, services or facilities if such a restriction is necessary to comply with the doctrine of the organisation or to avoid conflicting with the strongly held religious convictions of a significant number of the religion's followers. These exceptions do not apply where organisations have contracted with a public authority to provide public functions. So for example, where a church could refuse to let out its premises to a Gay Pride celebration, a religious organisation contracted with a local authority to provide meals to the elderly could not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. (This example is given in explanatory notes to the proposed Equality Bill which retains this exemption).

3. Faiths and Rights

Human Rights

The Human Rights Act (1998) states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance." It adds that "Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others". To summarise the Act in relation to religious belief, the key elements provide:

- An *absolute* right to hold religious belief or opinions and other beliefs
- A *qualified* right to manifest religion or belief
- A *collective* right to manifest religion or belief
- Freedom of thought and conscience as well as religion
    [Source: Greater London Authority Faith Equality Scheme 2004]

In many ways these act as protections for faith communities. Yet it should also be noted that there is an implication of tolerance here, not only from non-religious people to those of faith, but also between faith communities themselves. This may be a broad area which faith communities wish to engage with at many levels and is in general terms an issue of social justice, equality and fairness.

Faiths and the 'Multiple Perspectives Dilemma'

Having reviewed the legislation and regulations from the perspectives of three main clusters of concern, the next section also addresses equalities from the point of view of the various roles which faith communities might take in the course of their key public activities in addition to employment. These are:

- Education
- Grant-making
- Services

Education

Some faith communities are closely and widely engaged in the provision of education. This is particularly true of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. The British Humanist Society complains that "the law on religion and belief in schools constitutes discrimination not only against the non-religious but also against all those with non-Christian religious beliefs" (BHA 2005:22). They add that this is not just about faith schools (a growing issue) but is "also a feature of community and non-religious foundation schools" (ibid:22-23) and they ascribe this to a lag between changes in British society and political action to catch up. Their particular concern is with the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship (School Standards and Framework Act 1998), though this is "subject to the parental right of excusal or other special arrangements for their child" (ibid:25).

The question of the role of faiths in education is a growing one in current policy contexts and it may be advisable for faith communities to develop a statement in relation to their position on this. In addition there are practical questions about school assemblies, acts of worship, religious education and access policies and procedures which should be considered.

Faith based educational employers may also wish to consider their position in relation to the employment of people of faith and otherwise, particularly taking into account the possibility for claiming 'genuine occupational requirements' (see above).

Grant-Making

Many faith communities engage in social action and community work. This frequently involves them as employers (of both staff and volunteers) and the provisions and parameters discussed (above) apply. In addition, some faith communities are grant-makers, providing sums of funding and/or other resources and support. Best practice is well established in grant-making generally. (For example, see Ahmed et al 2006). There is an equalities dimension in faith-based grant-making which should be taken into account in a number of ways. Key questions are associated with eligibility and with processes.

First is the issue of procedures for applications, which should not disadvantage any groups covered in the legislation, though it is possible that faith-based grant-makers may wish to support initiatives from within their own faith backgrounds.

Second, grant-makers may in any case wish to promote the widest spirit of the equalities frameworks by introducing policies and criteria which encourage

broad representation of minority and oppressed groups and good practice in relation to employment.

Third, where funding is intended to support the employment of staff and/or volunteers, grant-makers may wish to consider the equalities measures in relation to the applicants' plans. This may be of particular importance in relation to financial management structures and child protection.

Services

Many of these same issues apply to the provision of services. In addition, some of the legislation extends to the provision of services. The relevant measures are:

- The Equality Act (2006)
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007
- The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) [and amended 2000]
- The Race Relations Act (1976) [and amended 2000]
- The Disability Discrimination Act (1997)

Here there is specific provision for prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race and disability, sexual orientation and religion & belief in the provision of services. Faith communities may wish to consider their positions in advance in relation to these.

Summary of issues

The table, below, is intended to summarise the issues in a systematic way, following the headings used, above. Each issue is contained within the paper under its respective heading and a fuller account of the issues is available there. The last column, headed 'actions?' is left empty with the intention that readers of this report give consideration to what they themselves might do in relation to each issue.

AREA	ISSUE	ACTIONS?
Employment		
Recruitment	- Outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex, race, offending, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief - Criteria-based selection - Monitoring of recruitment practices and outcomes - Promoting the appointment of a representative workforce - Holy Days, Festivals, other observances, diet, ablutions, prayer facilities - Volunteering vs employment	
Pay and conditions	Equal pay for like work, equivalent work or work of equal value	

	• Faiths and the role of women • Professional vs non-professional • Clergy vs laity • Congregational participation and governance • Dress code • Leave for religious purposes • Diet • 'Subtle' discrimination – disparities of pay, pension and promotion • Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues	
Access	• Physical access to buildings • For worship • For work • For (social) services • Access to opportunities for participation • Listed and historic buildings	
Religion and Sexual Orientation	• Outlaws direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief • Outlaws harassment on these grounds • Outlaws victimisation on these grounds • Very wide definitions • Relevance of a person's faith to their role? Genuine Occupational Requirements? • Implications for inter/multi faith work and perspectives?	
Crime and Offending	• Outlaws discrimination on the grounds of 'spent' offences • Exception where working with children and vulnerable adults – enhanced CRB check required	
Genuine Occupational Requirements	• Hard to establish a genuine occupation requirement? • Risk of conflict between faith and sexual orientation? When is it a GOR that Priests not be gay, for example? • Relationship between employment and vocation	
Wider Discrimination		
	• Theological, moral and ethical positions as a risk to equalities legislation?	
Sex	• Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex in services and goods • Equal access to training opportunities and career development	

	• Services to be equally available • Role of women in faith communities	
Gender	• Legal recognition of transgender people. • Need not be informed of previous gender	
Race	• Institutional racism?	
Disability	• Access to buildings • Attitudes and perceptions about capacity and skills	
Sexual Orientation	• Equality Act Regulations 2007 prohibits discrimination in provision of goods, facilities and services, public functions, premises & education • Exemptions to religious organisations do not apply to commercial, schools or when contracted to provide public function	
Religion & Belief	• 2006 Equality Act prohibits discrimination in provision of goods, facilities and services, public functions, premises & education	
Faiths and Rights		
Human Rights	• 'Absolute' • 'Qualified' • 'Collective' • Social justice as well as the 'letter of the law'	
Multiple Perspectives		
Education	• Daily collective worship • Privileging Christianity? • RE • Access policies and procedures • Employment of staff 'of faith'?	
Grant-making	• Eligibility and processes • Non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion & belief. • Grant making policies and criteria to promote broad participation and equalities? • Assessment of applicants plans in terms of their approaches to equalities?	
Services	• Outlaws discrimination in the provision of services on the grounds of sex, race disability, sexual orientation and religion & belief	

Part Three: Literature and Other Sources

The Research Gap – the wider literature

It was anticipated at the start of this research that the wider literature relating explicitly to faith and sexual orientation would be sparse and made up mostly of 'grey' (non-peer reviewed) sources. This proved to be the case. The majority of texts relating to 'faith and sexuality' are concerned with faith positions on homosexuality or individuals of faith and their reconciliation of spirituality and sexuality, as we shall see, below.

Literature relating specifically to the equalities framework, from a faith perspective is minimal. This research gap is not exclusive to the field of faith. A 2003 literature review into equality and diversity in local government in England found no literature relating to the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Since then *The Changing Politics of Lesbian and Gay Equality in Local Government 1990-2001,* argued that although there has been an overall trend towards the mainstreaming of equalities, this is not necessarily reflected in the policies, practices and procedures that exist in local government. Furthermore, the democratic changes towards Cabinet government and the elimination of service committees were also seen to have a negative impact on lesbian and gay representation. (Stonewall, 2007:15)

In relation to politics and participation, an ESRC-funded research project on lesbian and gay equality in British local government argued that in the absence of any explicit central government policy supporting lesbian and gay equalities, local authorities and communities are left to devise their own strategies, which are dependent on and affected by local political, cultural, and religious contexts and history (Carabine & Monro, 2004) .

Stonewall argues that research into lesbian and gay issues is limited due, firstly, to a lack of funding for extensive research projects, and secondly because assessing the needs of the lesbian and gay community has not been a national priority; "There has been no extensive research to investigate the extent of lesbian and gay people's inclusion in society, or the extent and impact of their exclusion" (Stonewall 2007, p3). Correspondingly, it is argued that lesbian and gay policy development is still at the most elementary stage.

At the root of this omission is the lack of baseline data. The National Census does not ask about sexual orientation, and general, national attitudinal studies do not include questions about homophobia and attitudes to lesbian and gay people. There is also no formal mechanism to ensure that lesbian and gay issues are at the heart of any government policy development, nor is there any research that identifies why this is the case, or assesses the impact of this omission (Stonewall 2007).

So faith groups are not alone in their lack of emphasis on issues of equality in relation to sexual orientation. Some of the reasons behind this lack of emphasis however, may be particularly pertinent to faith groups. This is an issue we will examine further later on.

Faith & Sexual Orientation

Despite many stereotypes surrounding people of faiths' positions on sexual orientation, very little research has been done to investigate their attitudes. With the exception of a few American studies examining the relationship between religion and attitudes to homosexuality (see Schulte & Battle 2004; Olson & Cadge 2002; Olson, Cadge & Harrisson 2006), this review found the recent publication by Stonewall, *Love thy Neighbour* (Hunt & Valentine 2008) to be the only in depth research in the UK into people of faith and their views on homosexuality. The report, based on interviews with Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Christian participants from across the north of England, found that many hold significantly more moderate views of homosexuality than is often claimed on their behalf by faith leaders or portrayed in stereotypes. It suggests more research is needed to listen to the quieter voices within faith communities. Interviewees suggested that new legal protections for lesbian and gay people, including civil partnership, have had a 'civilising effect' on British society. This confirms the findings of *Living Together*, a YouGov survey of 2,000 people published by Stonewall in 2007, which found that 84 per cent of people who identified as religious disagreed with the statement 'homosexuality is morally unacceptable in all circumstances.' (see www.stonewall.org.uk) .

In the following section we consider attitudes within the Christian faith tradition in particular. This reflects the fact that most of the literature available comes from a single faith Christian perspective, which reflects its reported predominance numerically in the UK census (73% according to the Census 2001). It is also driven by the fact that homosexuality has been a major issue of debate within Christianity, specifically Anglicanism, in recent years. Following this is a section considering some of the other faiths, which we treat together because of the paucity of literature relating to them, and with the strong caveat that this does not imply that we view 'other traditions' as in any way homogenous.

Christianity

The greatest amount of published literature on faith and sexual orientation comes from a Christian perspective. In a letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church in 1986, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith described homosexuality as "although not a sin … more or less a strong tendency to an intrinsic moral evil" (Dominion 1987). The Church of England's two authoritative statements on homosexuality are the 1987 General Synod motion that sexual intercourse is an act of total commitment, which belongs properly within a permanent married relationship and the 1991 report, *Issues in Human Sexuality*. The latter states that 'homophile' orientation and activity could not be endorsed by the Church as "a parallel and alternative form of human sexuality as complete within the terms of the created order as the heterosexual".

The 2003 report, *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* traces the debate over homosexuality within the Anglican Church and encourages Christians to reflect on the issues. Despite Boswell's argument that homosexuality has been tolerated at times in Church history (Boswell 1980 in Dunphy 2000), the Roman Catholic House of Bishops contends that homosexuality has been consistently condemned within the Christian tradition, noting the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which under no circumstances allows for the approval of homosexual activity (House of Bishops 2003) The mainstream Christian approach to sexual ethics of "either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence" is still upheld by the Catholic Church, despite a recognition of the diversity of sexual behaviour and moral attitudes towards it. The official position of the Church of England remains that, whilst homosexuality should not be unlawful, neither can it be rightly blessed, though Episcopalian Anglicans in the USA have recently voted to allow for the ordination of gay Bishops and in the UK a recent Synod voted to allow blessings of same-sex partnerships.

Indeed, *Some Issues* acknowledges that neither the Church of England nor the Anglican tradition as a whole has been static in its thinking about issues surrounding sexuality (ibid p16). It is an example of the Church's tradition of supporting equality and social justice that the 1950s Church's Moral Welfare Council was a major influence in setting up the Wolfenden Commission and supporting its recommendation to abolish the law against male homosexual activity and to set the age of consent to 21. Likewise, Church leaders publicly welcomed steps taken to repudiate homophobic violence and to create new legal safeguards (House of Bishops 2006).

Since the 1950s there has been much debate within the Anglican and Catholic Churches as to whether the traditional view of homosexuality as sinful should be upheld. Since Unitarian minister Revd James Stoll's 'coming out', many other denominations are more accepting of homosexuality, with the Church of Christ in the USA and the United Church of Canada officially accepting homosexual relationships (House of Bishops 2003, p23). The Unitarians were the first to have an openly gay minister, to officially condemn discrimination and to take official church stances on matters of especial importance to the gay and lesbian community. This history of political action is based on the key principle of "the inherent worth and dignity of every human being" (Oppenheimer 1996:77). The same conviction had led an impassioned pro-gay movement from LGBT Christians, the literature of which is examined below. The Anglican Realignment in the USA, following the election of Gene Robinson, an openly gay man, as Bishop of New Hampshire is evidence of the importance and ferocity of the debate within the Anglican Church. (For a discussion of the key milestones of the debate, including *Issues in Human Sexuality,* see Bates 2004).

Separating the 'Sinner' and the 'Sin'

C.S Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, quoted in *Some Issues in Human Sexuality*, 2003, p8.

Heather K Mak, Jo-ann Tsang, 2008 Separating the 'sinner' from the 'sin'; Religious orientation and prejudiced behaviour toward sexual orientation & promiscuous sex. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol 47 (3)

One approach has been that taken by The (Church of England's) Archbishops' Council in its response to consultation on sexual orientation discrimination (June 2006) which draws a distinction between sexual orientation and behaviour. It argues that the new equalities regulations could, unless carefully drafted, cut across the right of churches and other faith communities and their members to manifest their own doctrines and convictions in this area without fear of legal sanction. Given that the law will not distinguish between orientation and conduct, requiring equal treatment on grounds of sexual orientation will require those who have religiously based convictions about the moral worth of conduct to act in a way which (in the case of some believers at least) will conflict with those convictions.

It contends that exemptions given to religious bodies would not mean any significant restriction on the rights of homosexual people, "since in many cases the facilities, services or premises concerned will be readily available from other sources, so that they will have a choice as to whether or not to avail themselves of the services of the religious organisation".

There is debate over whether, as argued by the Archbishop's Council, the regulations need to strike a careful balance, between potentially competing rights, or whether the same rights should apply to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or religious belief. For those in support of the latter argument, the idea that the LGBT community should have equal rights to everyone else, unless they are discriminated against by a religious organisation seems absurd. Yet exemptions in place in both employment and provision of services regulation protect religious organisations from unlawful discrimination in upholding their beliefs and regulations give the freedom of expression of those beliefs.

Some argue that the distinction upheld by the Church between act and person is impossible to uphold in practice as people are not divisible that way (Ellington et al 2001). Further, for Jakobsen, & Pellegrini, the concept of "love the sinner, hate the sin" is an inadequate formulation for dealing with politics of sexuality as it produces at best tolerance rather than freedom and justice: "Tolerance is supposed to be a sign of openness and a wedge against hate; but in practice it is exclusionary, hierarchical, and ultimately undemocratic. Tolerance is certainly an improvement over hate, but it is not the same thing as freedom" (Jakobsen, & Pellegrini, 2003;45).

Borrowing from the USA

Research carried out in the United States has shown that there is often disjuncture between official teaching and local practice, making the notion of a denominational split in attitudes to sexuality of limited help in understanding how local faith groups address issues (Ellington et al 2001). The research illustrates how congregational responses to sexual orientation can be a matter of negotiation on several levels as clergy and lay leaders try to reconcile official teachings with local concerns under a variety of organisational constraints and social and institutional environments. This mid-level analysis illuminates the process through which social norms are

constructed, institutional control is exerted, and through which social change occurs, which as argued by the authors is missing from most studies of religion & sexual orientation (ibid). The research showed that where attitudes to homosexuality were more accepting, they were informed by a more inclusive understanding of Christian teaching on social justice and love, with some congregations seeing the teachings of liberation theology extending to homosexuality, embracing sexual as well as economic oppression. Such an analysis is taken forward in the work of Althaus-Reid, examined below.

A more interpretive analysis of people's construction of the 'other' is found in Linneman's *Weathering Change: Gays and Lesbians, Christians Conservatives and everyday hostilities* (2003). The author's background in social psychology and social movements theory shapes this consideration of the significance of "political climates" and their relationship to people's perceptions of the socio-political context and their subsequent activity. Based on empirical study of perceptions of gay, lesbian and Christian conservatives in Washington, this study examines the ways in which people interpret the public mind and engage with government, participate in communities and reflect on the other. Further analysis of how Protestant clergy respond to homosexuality in local congregations in the US is found in Cadge & Wildeman 2008.

On this more personal level, Dominion (1987) acknowledges that Christians are often caught in a trap between wanting to help homosexuals as people, but finding their practices hard to accept. This perhaps reflects a similar dilemma experienced by many people in wider society. The distinction between 'person' and 'behaviour' is one that is emphasized time and again in Christian literature on sexuality and sexual orientation. Others, taking a more liberal stance, stress religion's denial of sexuality in general, particularly of the feminine and of sexual minorities (Cotter 1988). This has sometimes resulted in alternative interpretations, on the other hand, for example Cotter explores the relationship between sexuality and spirituality, arguing the spirit cannot flourish in a society where a person's sexuality is denied or condemned.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Christian Contributions

A significant LGBT Christian presence in the UK is supported by many prominent Christians supporting campaigns focused primarily on gay rights and equal treatment. Archbishop Desmond Tutu articulated his support in the preface to LGCM's *Called to Full Humanity, Letters to the Lambeth Bishops* (Summers et al, 1998)

Although the scope of this review does not dwell on an in-depth analysis of 'queer theology', we point to some publications which review its contribution. One such publication is M. Althaus-Reid & L. Isherwood eds (2005) *The Sexual Theologian – essays on sex, God and politics.* This book is part of the 'Queering Theology' series, which presents Queer Theology articulated around themes from Systematic Theology including death, the concept of God, and the problem of suffering, together with discussions on sexuality and sexual orientation.

A comprehensive survey of gay and lesbian theology is found in Stuart (2002) *Gay and Lesbian Theologies – Repetitions with critical difference.* Stuart argues that gay and lesbian theology has made an enormous contribution to Christian theology, although it has not been able to deal with the HIV/AIDS crisis and its theological analysis in so far as it has been constructed as a 'gay' issue. His analysis of the debate concludes that both sides are wrong in focusing on sexuality at all and that queer theology can give Christians the answers by returning to a Christian tradition that teaches that gender and sexual identities have no ultimate importance.

In this sense, Peddicord, in his examination of the Roman Catholic response to homosexuality in the US, focuses on a long tradition of social justice, challenging those who deny civil rights on the basis of Catholic Sexual teaching, arguing that justice precedes sexual ethics. He argues that Catholic teachings demand the Church's support of gay and lesbian rights legislation. Peddicord examines the argument that if the Church does not promote and defend the civil rights of gay people, it fails in its preaching of social justice. He examines John Courtney Murray's work on religious liberty, which showed that advocating religious liberty does not have to be founded on religious indifferentism. Likewise, he contends that to argue that gay people ought not to suffer discrimination for their sexual orientation and/or their decision to enter into a sexual partnership does not have to be predicated upon the acceptance of homosexuality as equal in dignity with heterosexuality. All that needs to be admitted is that government has no right to involvement in private lives of consenting adults and the Church no mandate for coercing into its moral stance (Peddicord 1996).

Others have highlighted this "false dilemma" which many Christians feel they face between faithfulness to the Bible and traditional teaching on sexual ethics or liberal conscience, arguing that acceptance of homosexuality would be in line with scripture (Coulton et al 2005). *The Queer Bible Commentary*, presents LGBT readings of texts and examines how biblical texts affect LGBT communities (Guest et al 2006).

Althaus-Reid's contemporary theology analyses expressions of Latin American spirituality in search for a new god "who challenges the oppressive powers of heterosexual orthodoxy, whiteness and global capitalism" (Althaus-Reid 2003, Preface). She uses liberation theology and Queer theory to explore a concept of God free of sexual and colonial prejudices. Her 2006 publication, *Liberation Theology and Sexuality* reflects the arguments of liberation theology and its new perspectives on sexuality, taking account of power and poverty in the construction of Christian faith and identity in Latin America.

There is much written on the personal experiences of homosexual people of faith, too. These tend to be focused on the experience of reconciling faith and sexuality, whilst providing ways of re-exploring Christianity and re-reading the Bible (for example, Williams 1992; Wink et al 1999; Buckley 2005; Coward et al 1998).

Islam

The Muslim Council of Britain, an umbrella organisation with about 350 Muslim institutions affiliated to it from across the UK, is clear in its support of the equal

treatment of all. However, it believes that homosexual relationships are sinful and clearly go against Islamic teachings. These contradictory positions underpin a very, often heatedly, contested area of opinion in which culturally intolerant understandings align with scriptural 'evidence' against same-sex relationships.

There are exceptions. The SAFRA project, a resource project set up by and for Muslim LBT women argues that there is no definitive opinion on sexuality, gender and Islam, and that Shari'ah is made up of diverse opinions. Some argue that sex and sexuality, now taboo, were once dealt with openly and positively in Islam. Habib's, *Female Homosexuality in the Middle East: Histories and representations*, examines the long history of female homosexuality in Arabic literature and scholarship, and the replacement of a medieval discourse on female sexuality with a new religious orthodoxy, no longer permissive of a variety of sexual behaviours. Habib points to a dispute surrounding the view of homosexuality in Islamic theology and suggests that the debate has not been properly attended to (Habib 2007). She quotes many references to homosexuality in previous generations of Muslims and argues that homosexuality as orientation was not recognized and thus homosexual behaviour considered differently, without the moral marker of 'identity'.

El-Rouayheb in *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World: 1500-1800*, argues that this lack of a concept of homosexuality is crucial to our understanding of homosexuality in the pre-modern Islamic world. It has been argued that in pre-modern Western Christian tradition, homosexuality was not regarded as a particular attribute of a certain type of person, but as a potential in all sensual creatures (Weeks 1985). Weeks argues that a crucial change in consciousness took place in the late 19th century bringing a new concern with the homosexual person, both in legal practice and in psychological and medical categorization (Weeks 1981, p102). Thus Habib suggests it is not until the twentieth century that Arabian homophobic rhetoric began to see both homosexuality and its acceptance as Western imports. She makes reference to Warren Johansson's argument that by outlawing homosexual expression and feeling, the Christian Church created the homosexual identity, thereby making opposition to it a totem of anti-Westernism in Arabian Islam (Johansson 1981 in Habib 2007).

Several Islamic reformist scholars have reinterpreted sacred verses to make space for more acceptance of homosexuality within Islam. They argue the word 'homosexuality' is not found in the Qur'an and that it is in fact silent on the matter of same sex relationships. Some argue that ideas on homosexuality are based on the story of Lot, which is not specifically about homosexuality but various forms of unlawful sexual behaviour and that its reading is influenced by Christian interpretations of the story of Lot, in which homosexuality is more explicitly mentioned (although in Christian theology, the same arguments are had and in fact homosexuality s not identified in the Bible's version of the Lot adventure either).

Jamal, Nahas, Yoesuf and Kugle listed on SAFRA website: www.safraproject.org

Al-fatiha, an LGBT organisation for Muslims is conducting a survey into the experiences and concerns of the LGBTQQ community . The results are intended to support the organisation's advocacy and educational work and whilst focused mainly on people's experiences of their sexuality, the survey does question levels of acceptance within respondents' religious and the wider community, which will produce some interesting results.

An interesting phenomenon is the growing body of material on the internet relating to sexual orientation and Islam, much of which is highly liberationist in its perspectives. An example of an archive of materials can be found at www.youtube.com.user/gayedmuslim.

Other Faiths

Our literature search found no specific material relating to Judaism and sexual orientation though the website for The World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews contains news articles on various issues relating to sexuality, including civil partnerships, mostly from an American perspective. One publication has proven unavailable but may be of interest if copies could be obtained: Greenberg S (2004) *Wrestling with God & Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*.

In an article for The Human Rights Campaign (USA), Ruth Vanita argues that the absence of a hierarchy or rulebook in Hinduism allows for much livelier debate on homosexuality, on the other hand. The author notes a 2004 article in *Hinduism Today,* which showed Hindu swamis to hold a range of opinions regarding homosexuality. Some right-wing Hindu groups, active both in India and in the United States, have expressed virulent opposition to homosexuality. However, several modern Hindu teachers emphasize that all desire, homosexual or heterosexual, is of the same nature, and that aspirants must work through and transcend desire which is associated with attachment and therefore the worldly self. At the same time, the suggestion is also made that the idea of reincarnation, in which people pass through various forms, genders and species, works against discrimination and promotes equality. Anti-homosexual law is considered to have developed from colonial influence, overshadowing the sexually diverse representation of gods in the sacred Hindu epics.

An affirming perspective is found in the mission statement of GALVA–108, the Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association. This international organisation is dedicated to the teachings of Lord Caitanya and the importance of all-inclusiveness. Its key teaching is "open up dialog and improve relations between third-gender Vaishnavas and their heterosexual peers, and to identify and correct any instances of

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and questioning or exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation (LGBTIQQ).

Al-fatiha's website was under construction at the time of writing, but may provide links to further related reading. www.al-fatiha.org

http://www.galva108.org/

discrimination or unfair treatment towards the former within any Gaudiya Vaishnava mission". The site hosts several articles promoting gay tolerance, too, from a Hindu perspective. Again, it is argued that sacred texts in Sanskrit constitute irrefutable evidence that the whole range of sexual behaviours and sexualities (by which it includes transgender identities) was known to ancient Hindus and that British colonial rulers wrote modern homophobia into education, law and politics.

On the other hand, ancient Hindu law books, from the first century onwards, categorize *ayoni* (non-vaginal sex) as impure. Most Hindu texts assume that everyone has a duty to marry and procreate. However, penances prescribed for same-sex acts are very light compared to penances for some types of heterosexual misconduct, such as adultery and rape. From another point of view, Hinduism sees all desire, including sexual desire, as problematic because it causes beings to be trapped in the cycle of death and rebirth.

As argued by Ramanuja Acarya, that there is no universal consensus on any matter in Hinduism comes down to the independence of each sect and each individual guru. In *Gay Marriage and Hinduism*, Ramanuja Acarya argues that although marriage is restricted to heterosexual couples desiring off-spring, which is given utmost importance in teachings, the concept of a sacred union is supported in scriptures. As evidence of this, the author argues that a commitment ceremony is actually described in the *Ramayana (between Rama & Sugriva)*

A 2005 study within the Hare Krishna Movement, or ISKCON community, provides some revealing insights into this non-sectarian movement's approach to homosexuality (Vrsabha 2005). The study argues that despite much debate within ISKON over homosexuality, a practical way of incorporating homosexuality within the organisation's social structure has not been reached. Using an international sample from within the ISKCON community, the study found that the majority felt that homosexuals were not understood within the movement, that they were not offered fair opportunities for spiritual advancement and felt alienated. Twenty-nine per cent of the respondents had considered committing suicide in relation to being a homosexual devotee in ISKCON. The majority also agreed that same-sex marriage should not be incorporated into ISKCON as it goes against the traditions and teachings and would engender negative reaction from outside.

Whilst we found no Baha'i statement relating explicitly to sexual orientation, the Baha'i Community of the UK has published statements on social justice, cohesion and disability arguing that "an inclusive and united society cannot exclude any section of its people, and neglects this vital fact at its peril". The approach to equalities is based on a fundamental belief that society should be ordered in such a way that every individual, whatever his or her gender, race or physical circumstances, should have every reasonable opportunity to fully develop his or her potential, live a rewarding life, and make a positive contribution to society at large .

No documentation was found on Buddhist views on homosexuality and equalities either. A review of Buddhist websites found that neither was there any special emphasis on any particular form of sexual behaviour being especially offensive or especially taboo. This perspective resides in the non-theism of the tradition which

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(http://www.bahai.org.uk/dp/disdis.htm).

focuses on 'attachment' and 'skilful practice' or 'behaviour' rather than on ethical codes as such.

Literature relating to Sikhism and sexual orientation were also difficult to locate. However as with other faiths, views on sexuality within Sikhism are diverse. Homosexuality is not mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib, yet there has been some public condemnation of homosexuality from Sikh authorities and the supreme Sikh religious body, the Akal Takht has issued an edict condemning gay marriage. Some interpretations of Sikh teachings hold that homosexuality is a manifestation of lust and therefore one of the five vices that must be controlled, whilst others see the emphasis on universal equality and brotherhood as support for the rights of homosexuals. The absence of reference to homosexuality in the Guru Granth Sahib is taken by some as demonstrative of the non-importance attached to sexuality. This is the stance taken by Sarbat.net, a group for LGBT Sikhs (www.sarbat.net) which emphasizes the teaching of equality. The emphasis on equal rights is demonstrated by the 9th Guru, who gave his life to uphold the right of Sikhs and Hindus to practice their religion freely when they were being forcefully converted to Islam, teaching all view points and lifestyles should be respected even if we ourselves do not believe or practice them. (Projectnaad)

Literature Relating to Faith groups and the Equalities Legislation

Equality is not a new pre-occupation for faiths. Faiths' concern with social justice and equality can be traced back to enlightenment philosophy and the work of Locke (see Waldron 2004; Poole 2004; Zuckert 2005). The literature dealing with faith groups and the equalities agenda is minimal, save the official responses from faith groups to the Equality Act and the Equalities Bill. Whilst *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* raises issues surrounding homosexual people's lives in the Anglican Church, it falls short of addressing homosexuality as an equalities issue. The Archbishops' Council's guidance document on the 2006 Equality Act will however be useful to churches in terms of understanding their role and how to meet the equalities framework. The document outlines the legislation surrounding what are key issues faced by some churches; how to reconcile religious beliefs which are non-accepting of homosexuality and anti-discriminatory practice. It does this by outlining the exceptions that apply to religious organisations in terms of the sexual orientation regulations.

Official responses from faith groups to the Equality Bill consultation give some insight, too, into their views regarding the equalities agenda. Official Christian responses, whilst positively endorsing the single Equalities Commission, are less embracing of the legislation itself, whilst the Muslim Council of Britain is clear in its support of the proposed legislation while at the same time appearing to condemn same sex relationships as unacceptable. There is much confusion.

It should be noted, too, that the consultation gained an overall negative response from Christian churches in terms of any extension of the duty to include sexual orientation. The Muslim Council of Britain however supports the extension of a singe

public sector duty to cover all six strands, including sexual orientation, arguing that it would enable public authorities to more effectively address the needs of the disadvantaged and multiple-discrimination. The MCB's supporting statement in the consultation form however focuses on the religion and belief strand, outlining the many ways in which Muslims experience discrimination, particularly in employment. A SAFRA project report identifying the difficulties experienced by Muslim lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in accessing social and legal services examines in detail some of the issues experienced by Muslim women who are lesbian. In doing so, it warns that a compartmentalist approach to diversity (race, age, gender specific) overlooks the needs of Muslim LBT women. It argues that service providers and organisations should formulate social policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, race, religion, immigration status and class as multiple factors of discrimination experienced in combination rather than as separate issues. The report also argues that sexual orientation should be treated as a vulnerability that requires positive action in terms of welfare and social services.

The table below outlines the official responses from Christian organisations and some Muslim, although clearly no response summarized here claims to represent the faith as a whole and whilst there is a degree of convergence in Christian responses, the Muslim responses are not comprehensive enough to make any such comparisons and official responses from other faiths were not available/made.

Table: Responses from faith groups to the Government Consultation on the Equality Bill

Organisation	Summary of Response
Al-Manaar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre	• Positive response. Acknowledges benefit of Bill to non-ethnic religious minorities not covered by current legislation. • Argues extension of Equality Duty will promote cohesion and prevent drift towards segregation.
Black Majority Church Consultative Consortium	• Positive response. Opposes outlaw of harassment on ground of religion and belief (will restrict evangelism) and sexual orientation (concerned limits Christian teaching on sexual morality). Believes this would encourage litigation against church leaders preaching the Gospel. • Opposes Single Duty to cover sexual orientation – divisive and damaging to relationship between Christians and authorities. Would also be damaging to black communities who have set up services and businesses to address "social ills" of specific concern to this community. • Argue that whilst have duty to be loving to transsexuals, believe freedom to treat them differently

(www.safraproject.org./Reports/Safra_Project-Initial_findings-2002.pdf)

All responses taken from Government Equalities Office www.equalities.gov.uk

	is essential.
Blandford Evangelical Church	• Oppose notion of sexual orientation as biological and thus given more rights than religion & belief (notion found in report by Joint Committee on Human Rights) • Against harassment provisions as would lead to infringement of rights for individuals based on religion and belief.
Board of Deputies of British Jews	• Supports extension of equality provisions to all 6 strands. • Supports maintaining current exemptions. • Supports extension of Duty to religion & belief, provided does not have detrimental impact on public funding to Jewish welfare organisations.
Brethren Christian Fellowship	• Opposes extension of Single Duty to religion & belief and sexual orientation. Stresses need for sensitivity in this area and further clarity that there is no requirement for public authorities to promote homosexuality or to devalue the importance of marriage. • Need balance between freedom from harassment and freedom of expression. If equalize all grounds of harassment, religion & belief at serious disadvantage expressing views can be seen as harassment.
CARE (Christian Charity, represented in UK and internationally)	• Opposes extension of indirect discrimination to cover gender reassignment without proper exemptions made for religious bodies (cannot create "false" records without going against beliefs) • GSR should be applicable to religious organisations to limit their welfare services (publicly funded) to heterosexuals so as to remain consistent with faith ethos. Point to inequality of regulations as LGB groups in receipt of government monies able to discriminate against heterosexuals – creates perception of hierarchy of rights. • Concern over conflict between religion & belief and sexual orientation strands – better exemptions needed on both sides. • Oppose Single Duty – whilst not requiring public authorities to promote homosexuality or devalue marriage, would provide foundation to do so. • Definition of public authorities should not include organisations carrying out public services. Need appropriate exemptions for faith based welfare projects to provide services that do not undermine their ethos. • Harassment: that requires 'intention' is important safeguard that should not be lost. Should not treat religion & belief in lesser way than others – underlines

	perception of hierarchy of rights and make it difficult for EHRC to work with faith communities. Need exemptions for religious organisations in application of sexual orientation harassment e.g. Denying communion to sexually active homosexuals.
Catholic Parliamentary Office	• Argues the distinction of a person from their actions elemental to correct understanding of human dignity. • Argues natural law transcends state law, manifested in human conscience. • Outlines concerns regarding adoption – should be exempt from regulations and be able to retain values and beliefs. Duty of state to defend "common good" by supporting family (married) life. • Church premises should be able to withhold use for activities contrary to beliefs – assert problem with activity not the person. • Schools safeguarded right to follow religious ethos in religious and moral education should be extended to maintain ethos of whole school. • Indirect discrimination should include exemption for churches regarding transsexuals and church records. • Opposes extension of Duty to sexual orientation (establishes platform for the promotion of homosexuality) and to religion & belief. • Opposed to widening definition of public authority – will place burden on voluntary sector organisations. • Harassment – extension could undermine freedom of expression and public discourse.
Christian Council of Britain	• Harassment: opposes extension to religion & belief and sexual orientation. Will restrict freedom of speech and be directly discriminatory to Christians who will be forced to compromise their faith. • Opposes extension of Duty to sexual orientation and religion & belief – discriminatory to Christians who will be forced to go against doctrinal teaching.
The Christian Institute	• Concerned the review has not struck a balance between competing interests in some areas. • Concern over harassment regulation and impact on freedom of speech. • Believe should be able to make distinction between sexual orientation and practice re employment legislation and maintain ability to recruit staff according to religious beliefs. • Argue central question of the distinction between person and act needs to be addressed or will result in legal conflicts. Government will be seen as imposing secular view on religious bodies. Without further exemptions, legislation discriminatory against religious believers.

	- Publicly funded welfare organisations should be able to discriminate on sexual orientation – if not result in hierarchy of rights. - Need exemptions for commercial activity organised around religious ethos e.g. B&B - Opposed to Single Duty – small organisations need wider exemptions - Religious organisations need exemptions from discrimination and harassment laws re gender reassignment. - Harassment: not necessary and definition too subjective. Will restrict freedom of speech. If extended in one area, must be to other – if not hierarchy of rights.
Church of England	- Concern over burden of further legislation on voluntary sector. - Concern over 'religion & belief' awarded lesser priority than other strands. - Concerned that extending protection against indirect discrimination to gender reassignment could result in claims being brought against clergy re registers. - Argue for extension of exemptions for religious organisations. - Legislation should contain proper exemptions for limiting the use of Church premises. - Concern over extension of 'duty' to religion & belief and sexual orientation (related to maintaining current regulations regarding teaching content in schools and status of 'established church') - Strongly opposed to any possible extension of the meaning of "public authority" - Concern that clergy not required to act in a manner that would conflict with those convictions in relation to gender reassignment is maintained. - Concern that legislation implies clergy might be legally required to solemnize the marriage, or conduct a service of blessing after civil marriage, of a person who had undergone gender reassignment, thereby conducting or endorsing what many Christians would consider to be a same-sex marriage. - Harassment: any extension of protection must be to all strands to avoid establishing a hierarchy of rights; concern over freedom of expression re preaching/evangelizing; definition to broad and subjective; regarding sexual orientation, concerned that religious followers, not just clergy should be able to freely express religious views.

Church of Scotland	• Supports harmonised approach to the goods, facilities and services and public functions provisions, provided balance struck between protection of religious freedoms and service-users where churches are providers of public functions. • Concerned that harassment on the grounds of religion & belief not be treated differently from other grounds.
Church Society	• Concerned legislation undermines freedom of speech • Harassment ill-defined • Concerned legislation outlaws promotion of marriage as proper place for sexual intercourse.
Evangelical Alliance	• Religious organisations need exception in any extension of indirect discrimination to cover gender reassignment. • Concerned objective justification test is inadequate protection of right to religion & belief in employment. • Genuine Service Requirement test must not undermine freedom of religious groups to determine own regulations & practices in line with faith. • Should retain exemption in SORS allowing owner of property to let only to those who behaviour/lifestyle is in accordance with their religious beliefs and practices • Harmonised approach to the goods, facilities and services and public functions provisions across grounds must allow for difference and 'reasonable accommodation between strands. • Against extension of single public sector duty but if extended must be to all 3 strands. Concerned would give public authorities freedom to promote homosexuality or devalue the importance of marriage. • Strongly opposed to any extension of public service duties to the private sector since this will inevitably reduce public service especially in the voluntary and charitable sectors. • Need to address issue of proselytism. • Definition of harassment too subjective & would act as "charter for malicious or ideologically motivated legal actions". Oppose extension on all grounds – but if extended, must be to all and contain exceptions for critique and expression of religious beliefs. Everyone should be equally protected against harassment by the 1997 Act so there is no need for specific harassment provisions in discrimination law. • The exception provided in the SORs regarding sale or letting of owner-occupied premises must be retained

Faithworks[11]	• Argues protection from discrimination should extend beyond individuals of faith to cover the rights of faith-based organisations. • Difficult to enforce a Public Sector Duty for religion & belief as very personal and difficult to monitor.
Imam Al-Khoei Foundation	• Support single public sector duty – positive effect on cohesion and inclusion of Muslim women. Outlines public services with particular relevance – e.g. probation, elderly care, health and education. • Recommends national registration scheme for madrasas to reduce risk of child abuse.
Kings Church International	• Opposes harassment regulation regarding religion & belief & sexual orientation– definition subjective and would damage freedom to preach. • Opposes duty regarding sexual orientation (will damage relationship between Christians and public authorities) and religion & belief (not all religions equal and will & not role of state) • Opposes the idea that religious organisations performing public functions should be bound by non-discrimination laws where this conflicts with their doctrinal teachings.
Lawyers Christian Fellowship	• Argue race, sex and disability fall into one category requiring protection from discrimination, whilst religion or belief and sexual orientation fall into a second category (contain element of choice). And 'age' a third. • Distinguish between sexual orientation & sexual practices. • Agree respect for all essential. However, not all religion or beliefs and not all sexual orientations or practices are equal so wrong to outlaw discrimination on those grounds. • Argue that transexualism needs to be addressed in own right. • Definition of harassment too vague. Object to outlawing on grounds of religion & belief (no evidence needed & impede freedom of speech) and sexual orientation (already covered and would restrict freedom of religion). • Opposes extension of duty to religion & belief (not all of equal value and burden on LAs) and on sexual orientation (some lifestyles detrimental to society) • Supports exemptions but those relating to non-

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11 Faithworks wrote guidelines for the 6 major faith groups in the UK on how to use and implement the GORs and these were approved and published by the DTI. Included guidance on how to articulate ethos.

	discrimination fall short of guaranteeing freedom to manifest faith. • Argue current laws outlawing discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and sexual orientation in relation to employment, goods, services, facilities, education, premises and public functions, should be reviewed.
Maranatha Community	• Concerned about procurement relating to equality – that Faith based organisations will be discriminated against for their perceived 'intolerance'. • Definition of harassment too subjective and worrying lack of 'intent'. • Opposes extension of harassment to religion & belief & sexual orientation. • Concern over hierarchy of rights. • Concerned legislation impinges religious freedom. Concerned that Government using legislation as a form of social engineering, telling the electorate what they are allowed to think and what they are not, and what social conduct is acceptable and what is not. The proposed legislation, contrary to its aims, is likely to cause division and resentment. • Legislation would compromise values and beliefs, restrict freedoms of conscience, speech and belief and lead to complicated and very expensive legal procedures.
Muslim Council of Britain	• In support of legislation. Will enable public authorities to more effectively address the needs of the disadvantaged and those facing multiple discrimination. • In support of extension of harassment regulations.
Muslim Women's Network UK	• Supports extension of single duty to religion and belief. Outline impact for key services in health & education for Muslims. Argue would compensate for present gaps in service provision under gender duty, which can often exclude Muslim women.
Stratford Upon Avon Baptist Church	• Opposes discrimination law whereby Christian B&B owners cannot refuse an unmarried couple (heterosexual or homosexual) - argue outside their beliefs and would be forcing them to condone something they think immoral.
Stroud Christian Fellowship	• Wants assurances that religious organisations will have access to representative bodies as do trade unions and public bodies.
Wembley Christian Centre)	• Opposes harassment regulation regarding religion & belief (because unnecessary, very broad and will damage freedom to preach and debate about religions) and sexual orientation (will be divisive and damage relationship between Christians and public

	authorities) don't believe religious organisations should be forced to act in conflict with doctrinal teachings. • Opposes duty for religion & belief – not all religions equal and state should not support "false teaching"
YMCA	• Acknowledges the benefits of single duty to young women but concerned that young mothers have not been featured in the Equality Review

Some Key Challenges for Faith Groups

The review of the literature suggests that challenges for faith groups are in the area of their attitudes to sexual orientation as an equalities issue and cohere around three main issues; the provision of services, employment and civil partnerships.

The provision of services: A concern expressed in the Archbishop's Council 2006 response paper was that churches would be obliged to provide services for people whose conduct they find morally unacceptable, fearing that "believers who are asked to provide services etc to those of whose conduct they disapprove, on religious grounds, will be required to act in a way which is contrary to the claims of their religiously informed conscience".

The report asserts that the context here is different from those involving discrimination on grounds of sex, race and (in general) religion or belief since requiring equal treatment of those of a different gender, race or religion or belief does not engage any moral judgment about the conduct of those protected. The Catholic Bishops' Conference response echoes this differentiation in claiming that the proposed legislation brings together intrinsic attributes such as sex, age and disability with others which it suggests are "at least in part", matters of individual lifestyle choice (sexual orientation). The response contends that from a moral point of view, the two do not give rise to equivalent rights (Catholic Bishops' Conference 2007). The main areas of concern are about services supporting adoption, marriage counselling, and faith schools, which it is hoped can be preserved as non-homosexual spaces.

For example, a Christian case against gay adoption is made in CARE's response to consultation on the Equality Bill and expounded in The Christian Institute's *Children as Trophies?* (2002). The latter builds on the Judaeo-Christian family ethic which views marriage as the only right context for sexual relations and the procreation of children. The argument put forward by CARE and echoed by other Christian groups is that churches engaged in providing adoption and fostering services should be able to operate within their faith ethos and deny their services to homosexuals and that failure to recognize this exception will have a detrimental effect on children.

Similarly, a concern shared between the Anglican and Catholic Churches is that their schools are able to teach in line with the tenets of their faith. Both are concerned that the legislation will mean the promotion of homosexuality in schools. The Government response to these concerns is clear that the legislation does not mean faith schools have a duty to promote homosexuality, but would have to show

they are working to support anti-discrimination policy, for example they have to have anti-homophobic bullying strategies (see the Equalities Bill – Government Response to the Consultation, July 2008)

Similar concerns are raised in relation to questions about the use of church premises for homosexual groups, with churches keen to uphold exemptions granted to religious organisations, allowing them to restrict usage and the provision of services.

Civil Partnerships – in this area there is concern among Christians that the duty to promote respect for the equal worth of different groups will demand that they accept civil partnerships as equivalent to marriage, obliging them to bless such a union, which some may find unacceptable. A 2000 statement on gay marriage by the Christian Institute argues that homosexual relationships are not equal to heterosexual marriage in either nature or morally and that laws should provide public order and a stable society. Two further documents from the Christian Institute outline their opposition to civil partnerships and what they see as the devaluation of marriage (Christian Institute 2002 &2004).

With all of these issues, the concern is that the exemptions relating to religious organisations in current legislation be maintained and evidenced in guidance documents. In most cases, the assertion of wishing to 'avoid conflicting with the strongly held religious convictions of a significant number of the religion's followers', would enable faith groups to lawfully restrict certain services to heterosexuals.

PART THREE – CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF FAITH

We wanted to test out in local experience some of what the literature review revealed by having conversations with people of faith. We did so in focus groups in two cities in the East of England conducted in the late Spring and early Summer of 2009. We welcomed 5 participants in the first and 17 in the other, totalling 23 participants. These were intended to be non-representative, qualitative groups, generating a safe space in which to talk freely about a contested area which, we know from the literature, faiths groups are often finding very challenging. We noted the traditions from which participants came, where they offered this information. But our analysis does not get down to the level of how different traditions report their views. This approach was taken because of the small numbers in the sample (23 altogether) which would preclude representativeness. We also judged that, in such small numbers, identifying the traditions of participants in the analysis risked the anonymity we were committed to. A larger follow up study should work with larger numbers from each of the traditions in order to explore any statistically significant differences between their attitudes and views in relation to equalities and sexual orientation.

We supplemented the focus group discussions with a short questionnaire, which was self-administered during the workshops prior to the focus group discussions and to non-attendees booked into the events. We received 18 responses. Again, the responses to the survey do not allow for comparison between faith traditions and this is a consideration for future, larger studies. However, overall there was a clear tendency towards reporting greater acceptance of all minority rights in general terms which then narrowed as questions became more practical and concrete about the participation, especially of homosexual people, in services and employment. A second overall tendency was for greater support for the equalities framework amongst those engaged in interfaith activity. This might suggest a higher level of understanding and tolerance of difference amongst those working across faith divides. This could result from that interaction or reflect a greater readiness for it in the first place. Further research in interfaith contexts would be interesting in this regard.

Questionnaires

The responses can be summarized, as follows:

Responses to questionnaire – 18 respondents			
Faith Tradition (some were not stated):	Christianity 8	Islam 1	
Organisation type:	Faith group 15	Inter faith group 2	
Do you provide services for the wider community?	Yes 15	No 3	
Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion as below on the following statements:			
Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
There are circumstances under which employment in religious organisations should be reserved specifically for men or for women			
3	9	3	2
Religious organisations should always ensure that all of their buildings are accessible to people with a disability.			
11	7	0	0
There are circumstances under which religious groups should be able to refuse access to services to transgender people.			
0	9	5	4
There are circumstances under which religious groups should be able to choose not to employ an otherwise eligible applicant because they are transgender.			
1	9	5	3
Community services provided by your faith group should be open to people of any faith tradition and none.			
8	8	2	0
Religious groups should enforce a mandatory retirement age for all employees.			
0	3	11	4
Religious groups should enforce a mandatory retirement age for all volunteers.			
0	2	12	4
Homosexuality is morally unacceptable under any circumstances.			
1	4	10	3
All people, regardless of their sexual orientation, should have equal rights.			
5	9	3	0
Religious groups should have the right to refuse access to worship to homosexual people.			
0	3	9	5
Religious groups should have the right to refuse access to services or premises they provide to homosexual people.			
1	5	8	3
Religious groups should be able to refuse the use of their premises to homosexual groups.			
3	8	5	2
Same sex couples should have the right to receive religious blessings of their civil partnerships.			
2	7	6	2
Homosexual couples should be able to adopt or foster children.			
1	6	8	3
Religious groups providing adoption/fostering services should be able to refuse their services to homosexual people.			
3	11	3	1
There are circumstances under which religious groups may need to know applicants' sexual orientation.			
2	9	4	3
There are circumstances under which religious groups should be allowed to choose not to employ otherwise eligible job applicants because of their sexual orientation.			
2	8	6	2
Homosexual people should be eligible for positions of religious leadership under all circumstances.			
2	4	8	4

The questionnaires responses suggest a general acceptance amongst these participants of the principle of equality for all. However, with regard to certain minority groups, this acceptance wavered when questions were raised about putting it into practice. There was agreement that community services provided by faith groups should be open to all, yet when asked about specific minority groups and specific services, there was not the same level of agreement.

Disability

One area in which there was complete consensus was with regard to disability with a resolute acceptance of equal rights. Although the adaptation of some faith buildings to ensure disabled access may pose some challenges to groups operating in old or listed buildings, this was seen as necessary and non-controversial.

Gender

In relation to gender, attitudes were more mixed. There was some bias in the area of employment towards a belief that certain posts should be reserved for specific genders. It is difficult to establish whether this tendency reflects gender bias per se. Whilst assumptions are made that this relates to a lack of equal opportunities for women, particularly in terms of leadership positions, the reservation of certain posts for men or women may be linked to other factors. For example, it may be felt that a leader of a women's group should be female.

Transgender

The attitudes towards the rights of transgender people were more ambivalent. There were mixed views on whether all services should be open to transgender people but there remained a bias with regards to employment displayed in a tendency not to want to employ transgender people.

Sexual orientation

Questions around the rights of those with minority sexual orientation produced the most controversy. Although there was disagreement that homosexuality is 'morally unacceptable', there was less acceptance of the practical participation of homosexuals in faith based organisations and in the services provided by them. It appears that the degree of acceptance can be inversely related to the level of participation or integration in the life of the organisation – the greater the participation in the broad life of the faith community, the less the acceptance. In theory there is greater acceptance, therefore, than translates into practice. There was general disagreement that homosexual people should be refused access to worship but in relation to access to services the picture is more mixed. In relation to the blessing of civil partnerships, for example, views were equally divided as to whether this should be a right.

The use of faith building premises by 'homosexual groups' was decidedly not favoured. This was a point often raised by faith groups during the consultation on the proposed Equality Bill. Here the view of some groups was that whilst access to premises by homosexual people was not deemed a problem, the hiring out of premises to homosexual groups was. This was seen as conflicting with the ethos of the organisation; the hosting of such groups could be seen as an endorsement of homosexuality. This was considered a threat to faith values, for example in that it de-values the importance of marriage.

Another area of controversy was the use of adoption services. The questionnaire revealed a tendency towards non-acceptance of same-sex couples adopting or fostering children and an even stronger feeling that adoption agencies should be able to discriminate in not offering their services to homosexual couples.

Attitudes to employment of homosexual people in faith organisations mirror this trend with support for their exclusion from certain posts – in some cases, from ALL posts - on the grounds of sexual orientation. This lack of acceptance is more marked in the idea of homosexual people not being eligible for some leadership positions.

Despite a general acceptance of the equal rights of minority groups, embedded in the value of social justice for all, there was less sympathy towards the practical involvement of certain minority groups. The tacit tolerance displayed in general terms did not translate into reports of the acceptance of the active participation of those of minority sexual orientation in particular. In areas perceived as having a direct moral or practical impact on the life of the organisation, acceptance was even less prevalent. Thus in the areas of adoption, employment and leadership, the rights of homosexual and transgender people were often denied when questions turned to their participation in practice.

Focus Groups

The views expressed in the questionnaires translated into similar thoughts and discussions in the focus groups. One notable difference was in the terms in which the conversation was conducted, however, and this is worth some reflection. In the first workshop we gave no 'rules for the discussion' and what emerged was some very lively and sometimes heated debate, some of which actually breached the equalities laws under discussion by being strongly homophobic. Non-participant observers noted the degree to which homophobia was 'allowed' by peer participants in this context and observed an atmosphere of uncertainty concerning the parameters of acceptability and appropriateness which they contrasted, for example, with a much greater certainty in relation to race. In the second workshop, some 'rules for the discussion' were presented, including being sensitive to the differing perspectives of participants. The result appeared to be a much more cautious discussion and observers wondered how authentic this had been. In both cases, what was highlighted was a great degree of uncertainty and confusion

about what the law is in the area of homophobia and much anxiety about how to treat this in public space.

The focus group discussions were centred on equalities legislation; what it means to faith groups, how they incorporate the regulations into the running of their organisations and the issues this gives rise to. As in the questionnaires, the implicit acceptance of equal rights for all was tested when applied to certain minority groups. As one participant stated;

> "Some we'd probably have no problem with whatsoever like race, disability, age, spent offences – but then the hot potato of gender …. on sexual orientation and religion or belief that could cause incredible conflict in terms of everything you stand for"

Religion and Belief

In addition to gender and sexual orientation, the focus groups identified religion and belief as a challenging strand of equalities legislation.

First, the overwhelming focus in the groups was how the legislation is experienced as a threat to faith groups. This was expressed in relation to identity and to the values of faith traditions. In practice, the regulations were seen to undermine faith groups' activities. The legislation was seen in terms of a bureaucratic burden, particularly when working with the public sector. Here the feeling of threat was confounded by a fear of being pushed out, of not being welcomed by public partners.

Second, this feeling of threat appeared strongly to obscure the wider values of social justice and anti-oppression underpinning the equalities agenda. The legislation was seen as counter to the activities of faith groups, rather than fostering the values of social justice, creating a level playing field for all groups to overcome disadvantage and promoting equal opportunities, which they might be expected to share. These appeared to be overshadowed by the perceived threat to faith groups in adhering to what are seen as constraints imposed by the legislation.

Equalities legislation

These responses must be viewed in light of a third important finding: that there is much confusion about the status and application of law and policy in the area of equalities. Participants were largely unaware of the details of equalities legislation and of their status in relation to it. There were indications of a widespread belief that the legislation applies only where projects and activities are publicly funded. There was a particular lack of knowledge around the legislation relating to employment and the provision of services.

The perceived threat and the confusion around equalities legislation appears to be diverting attention away from its underlying principles. The dimensions relating to improving equalities for oppressed and minority groups were

largely ignored. Instead, discussion focused on ways of avoiding or getting round the legislation so groups could continue with their activities.

Threats

In our groups there was strong expression of feeling threatened by the equalities agenda, though it was not spelled out which parts specifically, if any, were seen as especially problematic. Concerns were generalized and ill-defined. This appeared to be based in large part on lack of understanding of what the legislation requires and applies to. One concern seemed to revolve around anxiety that faith groups are going to be made to employ and work with gay people regardless of their theological or moral stances. Another concern was about being made to work with or employ people from other faiths or none, but it was very difficult to discern the boundaries between these sets of concerns as the discussions largely swirled around a more general sense of being threatened in terms of being 'allowed' to believe and practice what they would like.

Abiding by the equalities legislation was seen as

> "a very very difficult challenge" ,

which was perceived as opening

> "a can of worms"

The obligation to embrace those who do not share the faith of the organisation, or who are seen as counter to those values was considered detrimental to their identity. One participant expressed the fear of

> "losing our identity by working with people who don't share our faith".

There was the sense, too, that by working with other faiths, their own would be somehow diluted. The inclusion of other faiths was seen as a barrier to the work of the organisation. This poses a challenge for inter-faith strategies.

This perception extended to the area of employment. This was expressed on practical grounds in the idea that all employees should embrace the faith of the organisation. As one participant put it,

> "everyone in the organisation is part of the religion – we'd object to a non-Muslim cleaner" .

Whilst this may be deemed a requirement in terms of the handling of holy books/sacred objects, there was also a fear expressed about the impact which inclusion of 'outsiders' may have on the organisation's identity and on the values of their faith. Part of this fear is linked to the idea that everyone working in the organisation is part of it and therefore representative of its

values. To include non-faith workers was seen as a dilution of the strength of that faith.

The threat to faith-based organisations was particularly felt when it comes to working in partnership with public bodies, so that

"government says it wants to work with us then makes it difficult" .

These difficulties were expressed in terms of the bureaucratic strain of meeting all the regulations;

"bureaucracy attached to all this is a burden for us" .

That equalities legislation poses a threat to the faith of faith-based organisations was expressed in a

"fear of our ethos disappearing" .

There was a feeling that the faith element of the services provided by faith groups was not welcomed by government. It was felt that this resulted in a lack of referrals to faith-based service providers and one participant reported that

"children's residential centres have closed down as a result".

Others expressed a feeling of being forced to secularise in order to obtain public funds. As one participant explained,

"one of the things that puts people's backs up is a conspiracy to take the Christian out of them and not to recognize the power of Jesus to restore people – that makes it an impossible situation"

and there was perception of

"pressure from funders to cut religion out"

Under the duty to employ eligible non-Christians, one participant feared that

"the ethos of our Christian counseling service will go now" …. this is what happens – all of this could undermine the work I'm doing"

The idea of the equalities framework "undermining our work" suggests that the underlying positive aspirations of the legislation are being obscured by this sense of anxiety and threat. Rather than identifying shared values of social justice and equality, much discussion focuses on perceived tensions between the work of faith-based organisations and the equalities framework:

"a lot of what is being legislated for is not what we signed up for – we were motivated by different reasons"

Negotiating the legislation – finding ways round!

One response to these concerns and anxieties was considerable confusion about the status of equalities legislation and participants' own subjectivity to it. There was a strong element of feeling the agenda were incidental, or even non-applicable to faith groups. Discussion consistently focused on ways of getting round the legislation in order not to have to comply with areas that posed particular difficulties. Suggestions included working

> "in partnerships so we can refer people on who we can't work with", or that "rebranding is the way forward"

One discussion explored how one way round the legislation was to not seek public funds;

> "We'll go after less government funding" .

This is indicative of confusion over the application of equalities legislation outside of public contracts. It also suggests a retreat from obligations expressed by other participants;

> "certain faiths will just do things behind closed doors"

> "groups will go ahead despite the legislation, behind closed doors" ,

> "Very often churches do take exception against equalities laws. They think they're outside the law".

There was a widespread view that if faith groups are not publicly funded, they are not subject to the legislation:

> "In my box I can do what I want" .

> "if you start getting money from government you become one of its stooges".

Also expressed was the idea that some groups are more subject to the equalities laws than others and again this was linked to ideas about connection with the public sphere;

> "The Church of England has to follow the rules more closely than independent churches".

This approach was apparent in respect to employment with participants suggesting that,

> "in the end you're going to choose who you want anyway" .

> "You've got to find the right person for the job and then back it up".

There were indications that this approach is deemed appropriate for some faiths. For example;

> "For Muslims there are some men's positions and some women's positions"

In some cases people seemed to think that faith groups are not subject to employment laws at all;

> "Trouble is we don't think of ourselves as businesses".

This reveals the challenges in enforcing employment equality; it suggests the need to change organisational as well as individual mindsets.

In this respect, there was some confusion over the use of General Occupational Requirements with the idea that they can be invoked to avoid employing someone of a particular gender or sexual orientation to any position. The example was given of a youth worker who "had to be a Christian". When asked what would have happened if the only applicant had been homosexual, the response was that their exclusion could be justified on theological grounds.

The lack of understanding around the application of the legislation and faith groups' subjectivity to it poses a challenge for policy makers but also in terms of the people who will experience inequality as a result. It also raises questions about effective monitoring and how that should be undertaken.

Sexual Orientation

As with the results of the questionnaire, the focus groups revealed particular concerns over sexual orientation. Participants expressed a discomfort with issues to do with sexual orientation and this constituted the majority of the discussion in both focus groups;

> "We're in the air with sexual things"

Yet some comments revealed a much stronger resistance to the ideals of anti-discrimination legislation;

> "To me gays are the same as people who interfere with children".

Particularly in respect to employment, it was clear that some perceive homosexual people as a threat to the organisation and its members:

> "people might want to transfer their sexual desires on to others, even in the corner shop, let alone in religious buildings".

Again, here it was felt that faith groups were not answerable to the law:

"God's laws are clear and absolute and government is trying to go round these"

Blocks or obstacles

The participants in our focus groups also identified a number of general obstacles to engagement. There was a discussion about how policy makers misrepresent the full diversity of faiths, for example, in order to prove a liberal-secular point:

"government talks to liberal faith groups who will legitimize their views".

In this context it was also acknowledged that there is very great debate about sexual orientation in particular between traditions, and that the government 'equalities' view is just one of many and should not take precedence. One participant asked:

"who should government consult to resolve these debates? There is no single interpretation to turn to", and

"it is very difficult for interfaith strategies to work when there are so many different values"

At one pole of this debate, another participant asserted that the

"Q'uran and Bible are fact. They cannot be debatable"

Another retorted that

"there are people here open enough to have this discussion but there are thousands of faith groups elsewhere who don't even know about it"

Good practice is possible

On the other hand, some participants did see the equalities legislation as a positive guide to achieving social justice. The fear of losing the faith element of services was countered by examples of good practice. One participant highlighted the methods employed by some faith schools in complying with regulations whilst maintaining a faith ethos. Innovative differentiation techniques used in education allowed for the inclusion of all faiths and none in faith-based activities. In this sense the faith element was seen as 'value added'.

In contrast to the feeling of pressure to secularise in order to meet regulations, one participant stated,

"I don't believe it (the legislation) is trying to prevent anyone pursuing their faith…but to provide a level playing field".

There is more of a focus here on pursuing equal opportunity for all, with an insistence that where the ethos of the organisation genuinely requires any restriction;

"It is crucial that we do this in a caring, compassionate way".

Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall, the views of the faith participants we spoke with in relation to equalities were driven by **a feeling of threat**. These faith groups were fearful of losing their identity and ethos in a wider political atmosphere of liberal secularism which fails to understand their deeply held beliefs and convictions.

In some cases, this appears to lead in the direction of **a search for ways round the legislation**, rather than ways of working with it. In turn, the perceived threat seems to obscure the opportunities for identifying a shared agenda for social justice, with faith groups focusing on the apparent risks that the regulations bring to them, rather than the principles which underlie them.

Policy makers face a significant challenge in getting faith groups on board, if the views we found are indicative of a more general milieu. At the same time, faith groups have considerable work to do to grasp what motivates the equalities agenda and their own status in relation to it. **A negative 'getting away with it' approach may be a tempting default position** but it serves primarily to conceal honesty and integrity about what faiths really think about equality and why they think it.

For faiths, a serious **process of internal debate and external engagement with the issues is clearly required**. For some this will result in an emerging understanding of the commonalities of interest between their aims and those of the equalities agenda. For others it will confirm them in their view that their own world views and those of the wider society in which the operate are in parts at odds. It will be for them and, in some cases the courts, to navigate an accommodation accordingly.

There is potential for a recasting of the relationship between faiths and equalities away from 'threat' and **towards a shared agenda for addressing oppression and inequality driven by common values**, where they can be identified. This will require a process of **positive education, supported by public policy**, and open minded engagement by people of faith. In this way faiths could find their way to supporting a new broader public epistemology than we have been used to, which goes beyond humans as citizens or consumers and embraces the values of equality and human rights which lie at the root of personal and community happiness.

[I think we could well have a paragraph here about the R&B strand of the legislation – maybe that it is having unintentional effects in weakening or making vulnerable, the very faith groups it was intended to support. It is already being used by anti-religion 'spiritual' movements and by secularists to undermine the traditional strengths of faith groups being present in their

community and bring tangible benefits to that community. It seems that faith groups are recognizing that threat without necessarily being able to articulate it. Perhaps one recommendation should be, that they are given space and opportunity to explore, articulate and be listened to seriously?]

Summary of findings and recommendations:

1. That some people of faith find aspects of the equalities agenda threatening to their values and ethos and therefore to their practices in community based social action, especially as that relates to working with lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and to the outworking of the Religion and Belief strand;

2. That this obscures an engagement with the equalities agenda which could otherwise make the most of what it shares in terms of a commitment to social justice and human fulfilment;

3. That a process of active education is required to recast the 'threat' perception in the direction of a 'social justice' approach, as well as to 'surface' and resolve differences in relation to sexual orientation, accepting that resolution might result in dissent.

4. Similarly, a process of listening to, and working through the implications of the Religion and Belief legislation is required whilst it is sill of recent provenance

5. The report recommends that such a program of education and discussion be developed in partnership between a working group of people of faith and public policy partners.

6. This would be supported by further research which takes the initial findings from this study to explore them in the differential contexts of each tradition.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_issues_and_Confucianism

Resources, Toolkits & Guides

Despite a paucity of literature on the subject of faiths and equalities, there are several guidance documents on the framework, which are intended to be useful more widely to public and voluntary sector bodies. There are a number of guides dealing with the application of the equalities agenda within organisations. Some deal particularly with the sexual orientation regulations;

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Useful Contacts

Equality and Human Rights Commission, EHRC
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Stonewall
Tower Building
York Road
London SE1 7NX

Diversity in Action in Local Government (DAILOG)
Employers' Organisation for Local Government
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG