

THREE FAITHS FORUM



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Forum discusses Secularism and Faith Schools' Effect on Community Relations

Ms Lisa Harker and Professor Michael Kenny of IPPR (the Institute of Public Policy Research) spoke about their new projects looking into faith identities in British public life and within public policies when they addressed the Three Faiths Forum Advisory Board at the Ismaili Centre, London, this week.

IPPR sees this research as important, given the many areas of public life including education, welfare, public services, and security in which faith plays an increasing part. "The relationship with faith communities has moved up on the agenda with government," said Professor Kenny, who has been meeting with members of faith communities and interfaith organisations to inform the research question.

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain spoke of the launch of the new coalition 'Accord' and its concern about faith schools, highlighting the lack of research into their effects on society or the attitudes of children. In response, Alex Goldberg of the London Jewish Forum said the purpose of faith schools was to equip children for their future lives and to make them better citizens. There was a lively discussion from the audience with comments about the role many faith schools play in local communities and the need for young people to learn the social history of faith in the UK. Celia Blackden from Churches Together in England talked about the need for single faith schools to make connections with other schools.

Lady Felicity Blair read out a statement:

"Sir Sigmund has been kind enough to state on many occasions that my husband has been the first Commissioner to take seriously the significance of interfaith relations for community safety. As most of the papers this weekend also reveal, my husband has a distinguished track record in fostering diversity in the police service. I am unable to comment on the events of last week save to say that strong leaders take tough decisions when they are needed."

The executive director of the Three Faiths Forum, Mark Ebert, unveiled the new strategy of the Forum, as well as the new National Council, which will act as a forum for leaders of different spheres of UK society to discuss faith-based issues leading to action. The Muslim, Christian, and Jewish education officers and programme director reported on recent activities including its educational and mentoring work and future projects.

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