

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report for Information

Title:	REsilience Conference
Presented to:	SACRE
Presented by:	The Director of Children's Services
Date:	7 June 2011

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1) Purpose of Report:

1.1 This report provides SACRE with a summary of the national conference held as part of the REsilience project

2) Contextual Issues:

2.1 This paper supports the Corporate Strategy (maximising well being) by ensuring children's provision in religious education is secure.

3) The REsilience Project Conference

3.1 This was a day conference held at Central Hall Westminster in April 2011. It was intended for those involved in the development, delivery and participation in the *Resilience* programme. It was attended by approximately 60 delegates including the programme director, the chairman of the RE Council, members of the advisory group, representatives of the Department of Education, and schools that had participated in the project. Hampshire SACRE's Secondary School representative at the conference was Maureen Barnes who provided the summary of the meeting. (See Appendix 1 for details).

4) Recommendation:

That SACRE notes the report.

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE 12 April 2011 Central Hall Westminster.

This was a day conference for those involved in the development, delivery and participation in the *REsilience* programme. It was attended by about 60 delegates including the programme director, the chairman of the RE Council, members of the advisory group, representatives of the Department of Education, and schools that had participated in the project.

REsilience was a school based programme offered free of charge to maintained schools in England and Wales for the period up to March 2011 and was tailored to individual needs. Its aims were to:

- increase confidence in addressing contentious issues, particularly those sometimes linked with violent extremism
 - provide continuous professional development opportunities for all teachers of RE
 - encourage reflective practice
1. The day began with a plenary and discussion session considering the outcomes of the project, looking specifically at what schools and teachers had said about their confidence prior to involvement in the project when faced with contentious extremism issues in RE lessons. Consolidated responses from the participating schools were discussed and it was noted that the initial SEQ (completed by participating schools prior to involvement) had highlighted some concerns regarding the delivery of RE in schools:
 - a. It was generally noted that there was a lack of confidence in addressing issues of religious extremism; terrorist organisations claiming religious authority; situations in which religions are involved in contemporary conflict; and right-wing inspired race hatred, especially when given a religious justification.
 - b. Lack of confidence was expressed in knowing how to guide and help students to develop discernment when using the Internet, especially in relation to sites which promote hatred or violence.
 - c. A high proportion of schools had expressed lack of confidence that there was effective collaboration and communication with parents over the ethos of RE and the issues it raises.
 - d. One third of the schools involved had expressed little or no confidence that their RE was based on a sound knowledge about a range of religions and the use of effective learning outside the classroom.
 2. **The role of conspiracy theories in extremist groups.** This session was facilitated by Jamie Bartlett of Demos. He heads the Violence and Extremism Programme which looks at a range of anti-social behaviour (gang culture, knife crime, violent extremism) and researches the norms, attitudes, and incentives by which they operate. The programme is driven by the need to generate new primary research in

this area. The aim is to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon – the relationship between radicalisation and violence across many groups – and develop innovative and practical responses. His primary research interests lie in terrorism, radical and extremist movements, Islamism and violent extremism, organised crime and gang related activity.

Jamie spoke about his research and the difficulty in attaining a definition of extremism. He said that:

- Those who committed acts of terrorism were usually ‘swept up’ in the emotion rather than informed about the ideology.
- Dehumanisation of the opponents was always included in the process.
- Conspiracy theories held the group of extremists together creating a demonic outsider; they were used to discredit people from the group who were dissenting so that they became seen as part of the conspiracy; became the justification for action/killing in order to ‘wake up’ the oppressed to the nature of their oppressor/the conspiracy theory.
- You cannot tell people what to think so it is important to encourage them to be discerning. It is important to allow children to come into contact with radical ideas in a safe place: 3 elements to touch on in education were: truth/trust; interpretation; critical thinking skills. Work on spotting the propaganda agenda is useful (eg ‘Digital Disruption’).
- Young people especially feel concerned about issues. He affirmed their right to be radical and dissenting, but without resorting to violence, suggesting that there is a need to channel their energies in the right ways, since those who take part in non-violent direct action are less likely to take part in violent extremism.

3. Continued Professional Development into the Future – discussion of the possible development of CPD for existing teachers that should be available online, multi-layered, catering for the needs of specialists and non-specialists; high quality and relevant.

4. Prospective: RE(silience) in a Big Society – Various ideas were discussed in plenary groups: Ofsted: Seeking ways in which RE can be seen to support literacy and SMSC; providing RE*silience* training for the whole school; work with feeder schools, SACREs; developing links locally, nationally and globally.

It was a useful and inspiring day which clearly set the challenge to continue to promote and develop issues of RE*silience* in school, and enabled links to be made with other schools and RE professionals.