



SACREs and Development Planning Activities

**Creating, implementing and monitoring the
SACRE development plan**

Introduction

The purpose of a development plan for SACRE is twofold. Firstly, it establishes a set of priorities for SACRE to focus on within a given timeframe. Secondly, it identifies the signs of success that would show that a priority, or priorities, had been addressed. In this way your SACRE's work can have clear direction and it can report on its own progress on an annual basis in the Annual Report.

Where to start

The best place to start is the **RETool**, which can be found in the Resources section of the NASACRE website.

The RETool has five sections:

1. promoting improvement in the standards, the quality of teaching, and provision in RE;
2. evaluating the effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus;
3. promoting improvement in the provision and quality of collective worship;
4. managing the SACRE and building the partnership between the SACRE, the LA and other key stakeholders;
5. contributing to cohesion across the community and the promotion of social and racial harmony.

Each section has a number of key areas and it asks SACREs to judge themselves in each area as: Developing, Established or Advanced. In the RETool there is a place to note the evidence that supports the judgements made. This is particularly useful as all development planning needs to be evidence based and have a view to the evidence that would be needed to ensure that a priority based on a key area had been met.

Managing the process

Given that there are five areas within the RETool, it may not be easy for a SACRE to work with document in its entirety at one meeting. Therefore, in the first instance, SACRE may wish to establish a sub-group to look at the RETool as a whole and then to present its judgements to SACRE as a whole. From this SACRE may then wish to identify one or two sections to be the starting point of the development plan.

Example 1:

It may be two years since the Agreed Syllabus was published and it will not be reviewed for at least another two years but SACRE doesn't seem to have done much on collective worship in the memory of SACRE members. Therefore, collective worship would be a good place to start.

Example 2:

SACRE produced guidance on collective worship in the last year but would like to know how well the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus is going and whether it is helping to raise standards and so start with the Agreed Syllabus section.

When SACRE has agreed what it needs to prioritise then the development planning process can begin.

Who should be involved in developing the development plan?

Given the detailed nature of producing a development plan it might make most sense to delegate that task to a sub-group, with at least one member from each Group. The group should also include the RE professional supporting SACRE and an LA Officer, especially in cases where the RE professional is not an officer of the LA.

The role of the RE professional is to ensure that anything decided by the sub-group is in accordance with the statutory position of a SACRE and to advise on how realistic a suggested course of action may be. So, for instance, if the sub-group decide that it wants to find out what all teachers of RE in the authority think are the strengths and weaknesses of the Agreed Syllabus, the RE professional could confirm that this is within their remit in maintained community and controlled schools but may suggest targeted sampling as opposed to all teachers.

The remit of the LA Officer is in regard to access to schools, where that isn't within the remit of the RE professional, and the resourcing and budget implications of any action, or group of actions together. In this way the development plan can be effectively costed.

Once the actions have been agreed they can be presented to SACRE as a whole for discussion, amendment and/or adoption.

What makes a good action?

Within any development plan there should be clear indicators of success, sometimes referred to as targets. These should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timed.

Being specific enables SACRE to be clear about what it wants to achieve in terms of an action that came from the development planning process. The more **specific** the action, the easier it should be to gather evidence that the action was successful. There should be a clear idea about what a **measurable** or successful outcome to an action would actually look like – what difference will it make? If it won't make a measurable difference why then is it an action relating to a priority? Of course, there may be multiple ways of measuring the impact of an action and those ways should be clear in the development plan.

Whilst SACRE is an appointed body it may only meet three to six times a year therefore for its actions to be **attainable** it might need to work in partnership with others. Hence, if others are involved in the delivery of the action it will be important to ensure that they have been consulted first and are committed to taking part in anything that SACRE is planning.

The issue of **relevance** cannot be underestimated. SACRE may have a great idea but if it is not relevant to the development of SACRE, the LA or schools then it is a wasted opportunity.

Finally, it needs to have a clear **timeframe** with points along the way so that progress can be measured. If it is not on course for completion within the time given to it it is important for SACRE to know so that it can amend the priority or so that it can put pressure on to ensure that it is completed within the time specified.

How often?

It is useful to have an annual review of the development plan, although it is not always necessary to revisit the RETool annually.

Some SACREs have a three-year development plan, which enables some stability in relation to the four-year cycle of Council elections. Hence, if all the councillors changed at the end of their four years there would be continuity of action that transcended the electoral process most of the time. Other SACREs have a five-year development plan as this coincides with the Agreed Syllabus review process. Naturally, a cycle of two three-year development plans would have to address the Agreed Syllabus in one of those three years.

If SACRE has decided on a three-year or five-year development plan there are two ways that a SACRE might manage this.

1. Where a SACRE had an AGM, it might decide to revisit its action plan at that point. At this meeting progress might be looked at in some detail, recognising actions completed and the impact assessed.
2. SACRE could have the development plan as a standing item on every agenda. The advantage of this is that it would enable early intervention if an action was not on track to be completed within the time given, ceased to be relevant or had been completed early. In either case it is important that the development plan does not 'get lost' and is only visited three or five yearly. The actions and progress of the development plan should be reported in the Annual Report.

How would you know the development plan has been successful?

It is important that SACRE has the ability to know whether its development plan is of value, either to the SACRE itself or to the LA and its schools. At times it is difficult to assess this, other than by asking members of SACRE what they think about the effectiveness of the development plan on the basis of the evidence presented to them. Therefore every so often, it might be useful to have an external evaluator look at the development plan. This need not be someone external to the LA but someone who understands development planning and can ask the right sorts of questions to ensure that the development plan is everything that SACRE wishes it to be.

It is worth remembering that the development plan is a public document and therefore there is public accountability in both its formation and discharge.