



National Spiritual Assembly

Child protection guidelines

Reports reaching the National Spiritual Assembly indicate that some of the Friends have not appreciated the need for full compliance with the national Child Protection Guidelines. These lay down the basic minimum of procedures that must be followed for events where children and young people (up to age 18) are being looked after, taught in classes, or involved in activities.

Examples of the sort of gatherings that require the Child Protection Guidelines to be followed are: children's classes (whether at residential events such as Summer Schools, or regular events in their own right such as Baha'i Community Schools), training institute courses and study circles where children or young people are involved, and "baby sitting" arrangements made by event organisers so that adults may attend courses or study circles.

The consequences of failure to follow these Guidelines could be grave, and the National Spiritual Assembly regrets that because of the times we live in it must insist on full compliance with these Guidelines on each and every appropriate occasion.

Those who do not have a copy of the Child Protection Guidelines may obtain them by post from the National Office or electronically (PDF files) from resources@bahai.org.uk

Children of non-Bahá'í Families Attending Bahá'í Events

The National Spiritual Assembly has been studying some of the implications of having children from non-Baha'i families attending our gatherings and events, something which is likely to increase significantly during the current Plan.

It feels it is very important that where such children attend Baha'i Community Schools, residential events (including Summer Schools), training institute courses, study circles, or other such gatherings the parent or guardian has given permission in writing beforehand. The parent/guardian should also have been given in writing the name and contact details of a responsible person involved with the event with whom they can raise any concerns they may have.

This will help prevent concerns about or accusations of cultic-type activity or "emotional abuse", an aspect of child abuse which is becoming more publicised and can be difficult to refute.

Please could organisers of events and their responsible administrative bodies ensure that this guidance is followed on all occasions.

Assemblies formed at Ridván

Many of you are probably wondering how many Local Spiritual Assemblies were formed in the United Kingdom at Ridván, especially in light of the boundary changes.

We are delighted to tell you that at least 121 Local Spiritual Assemblies formed at Ridván:

Northern Ireland	8
Scotland	8
Wales	4
England	101

We are still ascertaining what has happened to a further 7 or 8 in England and so the total could be a bit higher.

We were very pleased to learn that of these 121, 18 were 'new' Assemblies, formed from communities where the boundary changes had divided existing Local Assembly areas. At least four were surprises – formed by new declarations or pioneer moves at the last minute.

The National Assembly was most encouraged by this and is extremely grateful to all those who have worked so hard to form the Local Assemblies in this difficult year. We are particularly grateful to the Baha'i Councils for all their work.

Establishment of Network and Standing Conference on Faith-Based Regeneration and Community Development

The National Spiritual Assembly is represented on a multi-faith steering group that is working to establish a network and standing conference of faith-based practitioners in urban regeneration and community development.

We be interested to know of Baha'is who are involved in urban regeneration and community development. This is a key area of government interest at the moment, and the Prime Minister has publicly committed himself to the involvement of the faith communities as partners in this work.

If you are such a person or if you know of a Baha'i involved in this work but not subscribing to NEWS (the National Assembly's e-mail news service), please let the Office of External Affairs know by contacting the National Office or, by email, to oea@bahai.org.uk.

The Network is planning a half-day seminar in Birmingham in February 2002 and a major national conference in London in June 2002. It will be essential for Baha'is with relevant skills and experience to be involved. So please let us know who you are.

(For more information on the Network [click here](#).)

Finance Department The Continental Fund

Many Baha'is do not know that there is a Continental Fund. This Fund supports the work of the Continental Board of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Board members across Europe.

As you can imagine, the work done by this arm of the Administrative Order, is quite complex and challenging and requires not only that letters and phone calls are responded to but that the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members travel, often quite long distances, to meet with National and Local Assemblies. With the change in the political

scene internationally since 1990, the number of National Assemblies has grown enormously and the work of the Continental Board of Counsellors has grown as well.

It is the goal of the Continental Board of Counsellors to be less dependent on the Universal House of Justice, which continues to provide the bulk of the money for the Continental Fund. The National Assembly wholeheartedly supports this goal.

Many Baha'is do not realise that the Guardian has told us that it is the privilege and responsibility of every individual Baha'i to support each of the funds of the Faith by personally contributing to them all. The easiest way to support the Continental Fund is to contribute to it regularly by way of standing order to the NSA of the Baha'is of the UK, earmarked for the Continental Fund. Or you can send a cheque to the NSA of the Baha'is of the UK with a note that this is earmarked for the Continental Fund.

Remember, if you are a tax payer, you can 'donate' to the National Fund at the same time by paying under the Gift Aid scheme. Those of you who have already filled in a Gift Aid form do not have to do so again – your donation to the Continental Fund will automatically attract the tax benefit to the National Fund. If you are donating by Gift Aid for the first time, you will need to get a form from the Finance Department.

The Universal House has put much of the work of the Five Year Plan on the shoulders of the Learned Arm. Let us support them as much as we can.

Finance Department
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