



REMEMBERING
SREBRENICA

Commemorating Srebrenica – A guide for Local Authorities

Local authorities are uniquely connected to individuals and organisations in their area and by commemorating Srebrenica Memorial Day you can foster good relations in your communities through bringing together those from different beliefs and background in a single act of remembrance.

Supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government, Remembering Srebrenica is committed to using the lessons from Srebrenica to tackle hatred and intolerance to help build a better, safer and more cohesive society for everyone.

Since 2013, local authorities across the UK have been commemorating Srebrenica annually in July in order to encourage local communities to come together and celebrate the rich diversity of their areas whilst fostering stronger, more cohesive communities. Commemorating Srebrenica through holding memorial events are a wonderful way to celebrate diversity, communicate the Council's commitment to social cohesion, build better, safer communities, and send a powerful message to those who seek to create divisions in society.

Many councils have found that commemorating Srebrenica links well to their council priorities of community cohesion, engagement with different communities and promoting understanding between faith groups. It also is a low cost and very simple way to turn council venues into a shared community space where different groups can come together and discuss tolerance and prejudice. It often allows people who would not normally meet to interact and often is a way of engaging with hard to reach communities.

There are a number of ways to commemorate Srebrenica Memorial Day on the 11th July. Please see our below suggestions of easy ways to get involved

- Hold a memorial event. This can be a simple way to bring your community together and commemorate the EU designated Srebrenica Memorial Day. Remembering Srebrenica can provide a suggested programme and resources for you including:
 - A short film which places Srebrenica in context and leads the audience through personal stories of survivors of the genocide;
 - Linking you up with one of our community champions from your area who has been part of our Lessons from Srebrenica programme and has visited Bosnia-Herzegovina to meet with survivors of the genocide and the Mothers of Srebrenica as a possible speaker for your event;
 - A number of physical resources such as books and banners to display in your buildings;
 - A draft speech for a council worker or Council Leader on how the lessons from Srebrenica are relevant to the communities with your borough; and
 - A selection of interfaith prayers and poems to be presented by local community or faith leaders.

- Fly a Remembering Srebrenica flag from your civic building (we can send you design files so you can produce a flag);

- Table a motion that the Council will commemorate Srebrenica and remember the victims of the genocide. We have a **draft motion** which has been used by other councils this year which can be replicated to make it relevant to your area and tailored to events taking place;
- Raise awareness for Srebrenica by mentioning Remembering Srebrenica on your website, social media and intranet in order to spread the lessons from Srebrenica and publicise memorial events which are happening in your area.

Take a look at how the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham commemorated Srebrenica in July 2015.

Council commemorates

People in Barking and Dagenham came together to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and learn lessons for their own community in the Town Square on 10th July. The event was organised by Barking and Dagenham Council with Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum.

Speaking at the event, the Leader of Barking and Dagenham Council, Cllr Darren Rodwell emphasised the importance of standing “united in our love of peace and to always be vigilant against racism and bigotry.”

The event included poetry readings, the screening of a film about Srebrenica and ended with prayers and a two minutes’ silence. Those present to provide their own perspectives included local politicians, young people and members of the UK’s Bosnian community who spoke about promoting peace, acceptance & tolerance.

Coming from a community which in the past has had to deal with the effects of racism, it was very important to the organisers that they use the event to learn the lessons from the past and remember the innocent victims of hatred. It was particularly important that the event showed young people in the borough how discrimination can ruin a community, and that everyone must work together to build a cohesive society.

By working with the local faith forum, the community in Barking came together and they used the opportunity to hear stories from different groups to see what united and connected people from different backgrounds, rather than dwelling on difference. The event focused on unity and a common humanity, as organisers felt that if we focus on difference it becomes easy to allow hatred to grow.

Following the event, many attendees felt that it was important to make small differences in their own lives and to do this everyday, not just on one single day in the year. This culminated in people thinking about their own everyday lives and how hatred and prejudice can permeate this. It led to discussions about respecting colleagues, valuing people from different socio-economic groups and touched on topics of domestic violence. All felt it was important to keep talking about Srebrenica and to ensure the stories are not lost and the lessons are learned.