



## Leicester Multicultural Advisory Group

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Organisation:** Leicester Multicultural Advisory Group (LMAG) – [www.thisisleicestershire.co.uk](http://www.thisisleicestershire.co.uk)

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**Partners involved:** Leicester City council, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Constabulary, Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Muslim Organisations, the Diocese of Leicester, Leicester Council of Faiths, Somali Development Association, Leicester Asian Business Association, BBC Radio Leicester, Central TV, Sabras Sound, MATV (Asian terrestrial TV channel), Leicester Sound, and Leicester Racial Equality Council

**Target Group:** The local media and the entire community of Leicester

### Programme Description:

In 2000 it was revealed that statistical analyses had predicted that Leicester would be the first city in Europe to have a minority white population by 2020. This put Leicester in the media spotlight in a way it had never been before. In 2001, with the general elections coming up, the issue of race was beginning to rear its head. How the media covered the elections, particularly concerning race, needed to be carefully handled.

A group was formed to respond and discuss any issues that might threaten *“the continuing development of a truly multicultural society in Leicester”* and to *“identify what measures, if any, could be taken to counter or lessen the impact of such threats, both in the short and long term.”*

*“The Group was the first attempt in the UK to bring together the full range of key local organisations to facilitate discussion about the threat, challenges and opportunities around community cohesion.”* Nick Carter, Editor, Leicester Mercury

*“LMAG is an organisation, made up of senior executives and other leaders of the city who voluntarily attend, indicating through their presence and behaviour that community cohesion is a priority for Leicester.”* Nick Carter, Editor, Leicester Mercury

The group was made up of executives and leaders of the local community, the police, council members, faith organisations and the media. The media involvement is what makes this initiative so unique. The media inform the discussion and, in turn, the other panel members inform the media. This means that the media support community cohesion projects, building bridges between diverse groups of people. Since 2001 the LMAG initiated the Leicester Electoral Compact. This involves all major local political party leaders publicly signing a document indicating their refusal to allow race to become an issue in their campaigns. Such a public display of inclusion has had a deep impact on race relations in Leicester. The media also play their role, giving limited coverage to any politician who will not sign the Compact.

**Challenge:** Ensuring ongoing meetings attract the calibre of members that attended when the group was first created.

**Solution:** Meeting bi-monthly, unless there is an emergency, means that the commitment doesn't get in the way of other work or hobbies. Keeping the group engaged is vital. Regular guest speakers give talks to the group on initiatives or communities to ensure topics are varied and up to date.

### Impact and Success Stories:

- After the 7/7 bomb attack on the London Underground and growing public hostility towards the UK's Muslim community, a peace vigil was held in Victoria Park. It united thousands of people from Leicester, from different faiths, backgrounds and ethnicity, in the call for peace.
- A rebuttal squad has been formed to respond at short notice to multi-cultural issues in the city. An agreement was made that issues will never be dismissed or covered up – positive solutions will be found.
- Membership has now expanded to 28 members. This is to embrace recently arrived ethnic groups, such as the Somali community.