

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report makes a number of recommendations concerning education, employment, housing, health, the police, citizenship and the media. It addresses the need for further engagement by the council with its myriad and growing communities. While recognising that Leicester offers a number of very positive practices on inclusion of its diverse communities, it calls for current and future policies on tackling socio-economic disadvantage and minority inclusion to ensure that all groups who make up the diverse population in the city are consulted and listened to, and that their specific needs are understood and accommodated.

13.1 Demographics and Research

1. Leicester City Council and the Leicester Partnership should initiate more focused research on and activities relevant to the plural cities shift in demographics and should establish policies for managing this shift.
2. Leicester City Council should explore the possibility of conducting in-depth studies comparing service delivery and residents' experiences in wards in the city with significant levels of disadvantage. Such a study could offer information on the chief determinants for socio-economic improvement, educational achievement and employment prospects in the long term, as well as enable proactive measures to be taken for the needs of young people.
3. Further studies should be commissioned which drill deeper into the data presented in this report, disaggregating the non-Muslim category into subgroups, and also the Muslim groups into ethnic groups for comparison. This would help provide a better understanding of ethnic, socio-economic and cultural variants of some of the issues discussed in the report. Such research could be sponsored by the City Council or the Leicester Partnership and would help to inform policies for employment and service delivery, particularly where a positive duty may apply.
4. There is a need for more focused studies of underachievement (and the complexities which lead to it) among Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Somali, Kurdish and other smaller communities. Such work could be sponsored by the regional government office or the Communities and Local Government Department, with a view to generating data and analysis that could be relevant in other parts of the country.

13.2 Education

5. Leicester City Council, the East Midlands Learning and Skills Council and related agencies should coordinate to provide more avenues of accessible and free English-language classes, including the establishment of smaller groups for

ethnically similar communities, to make access to learning English as easy as possible. This type of learning should accommodate child-care provision. This is particularly important for older people in existing communities and new arrivals.

6. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Leicester Education Authority should commission further research in order to better understand the impact of attending after-school madrassas on children's educational achievement levels and general wellbeing. Such studies could be beneficial for teachers in understanding the role of the madrasa in children's lives and how to best utilise them to achieve mutual educational goals.
7. The DCSF should commission more projects to look at the relationship between state education and madrasa education and look especially at complementarities, sharing facilities and expertise, for example, sharing the use of premises, dealing with common challenges such as absenteeism or organising classes to support parenting. The identification of best practices should be the focus, finding out what works and why, so that experiences can be disseminated.
8. Leicester City Council should ensure that policies to improve schools in Leicester consider the cultural, religious and social factors in the educational achievement of pupils. The city education authority should commission research on how these aspects affect the educational performance of schools, as well as the impact of non-English first languages on learning ability.

13.3 Employment

9. The East Midlands Learning and Skills Council should facilitate training for ethnic minorities (in particular Muslim women) in interview techniques, CV building and helping them understand the importance of using employment and career services for advice and guidance and where to go to for help.
10. More focused research is needed locally to look at the economic inactivity of Muslim women and if anything can be done to create greater engagement with the labour market. This could be jointly facilitated by agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council and the Leicester Partnership, and also the business sector, such as the Chamber of Commerce.
11. Partnerships of multiple agencies including schools and colleges, universities, careers services, the Mosaic mentoring scheme and Muslim organisations should be encouraged to promote discussions of the widening career choices and mentoring opportunities for young disadvantaged people. This would help young people look for a wider range of educational opportunities as well as take inspiration from successful role models.

13.4 Ethnic-minority and Muslim Entrepreneurs

12. The National Ethnic Minority Business Forum should develop mentoring programmes in the business sector to allow for entrepreneurial skills and experience to be passed on to newer or less established communities.
13. There is a need to support methods of empowering and recognising the contributions of ethnic-minority women, and Muslim women in particular. This has been identified through this report as well as in previous research, and agencies such the City Council, the Leicester Partnership and Muslim community organisations could help to facilitate such schemes.

13.5 Health

14. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland health authorities should devise more concerted awareness campaigns directed at the communities with the poorest health, on specific health matters such as diabetes and obesity. Approaches using cultural and religious avenues should be especially considered.
15. NHS²⁰⁴ Leicester City should conduct further research on the health needs of those with poorest health and evaluate existing communications strategies. Such strategies will enable pre-emptive measures to be taken on serious health issues which require long-term care and planning.
16. The Appointments Commission (which recruits non-executive directors of NHS trusts) should recruit more BME members to the boards of NHS trusts in Leicester.
17. NHS Leicester City should introduce a clearer and more visible system for providing feedback and critical comments from service users to an independent body similar to an ombudsman in other sectors.
18. NHS Leicester City should review its policy of chaplaincy provision to ensure that the faith and cultural needs of patients of minority faiths are adequately met.

13.6 Policing

19. Leicestershire Constabulary should maintain and further schemes and projects in areas with significant ethnic-minority populations in order to improve the image of the police among those communities and to encourage recruitment of young people and more females from minority backgrounds. Schemes such as work shadowing officers, accompanying police on city drives, visits to police

²⁰⁴ The National Health Service.

force headquarters and other elements of police work may be attractive and useful ways of building stronger bridges. Such work has been shown to be very effective (trials during Islam Awareness Week in 2007).

20. The constabulary should actively recruit more Muslims into Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) positions. An increase in the number of Muslims working across the City as PCSOs will help to combat cultural tensions around Muslim officers and help to create a more relaxed and positive environment for the communities and the police force.
21. The constabulary should further engage with communities to proactively raise awareness and discussions of sensitive aspects of policing, such as stop-and-search and anti-terror raids, and should clarify the guidelines for these procedures.
22. The police should improve the mechanisms for informing communities of police operations, including proactive de-briefing if suspects are released without charge. Such initiatives would enhance the impact of the police force's existing good practices in building community links, helping to build trust and giving communities more of a stake in policing.
23. Leicester City Council should emphasise that community cohesion is all-inclusive and not limited to relations between whites and Asians, or Hindus and Muslims. Efforts need to be developed to also build cohesion between Muslim communities such as the Somali and Pakistani, and more importantly to develop narratives about the commonalities of all citizens.

13.7 Civic and Political Engagement

24. Leicester City Council should consider creating awareness campaigns within Muslim and other BME communities about the civic institutions, processes and consultation mechanisms of the city. This could allow for a better and more strategic engagement in their contribution to the city.
25. Muslim organisations, mosques and leaders should promote the importance of citizenship more strongly and encourage their constituencies to take up more roles in civic forums and platforms in the city, for instance as parent governors, and have a greater engagement with agencies such as museums, libraries and neighbourhood groups.
26. Community groups should explore the model of "Citizen Organising" (for example, the London Citizens), where the institutions that have traditionally mobilised people such as religious congregations, trade unions and student movements come together to work and campaign for the common good.
27. There is room for even greater public- and voluntary-sector partnerships (e.g. through the Leicester Partnership) in order to deal with common challenges

confronting the city in a mutually beneficial way. For example, in East London community organisations and mosques have helped to lower truancy levels, engage in back-to-work schemes and deliver other services on behalf of the local authority.

28. Members of Parliament and other political figures in Leicester are encouraged to help build trust and the increased engagement of Muslim and BME communities with local, regional and national politics and the government. This could include visits to the Houses of Parliament or relevant government departments, for example, to encourage discussion with national political figures.
29. Leicester City Council, the Leicester Partnership and other such bodies are urged to simplify their grant provision processes and to consider offering funding for a longer period of time which would allow organisations to develop in a sustained manner. It is important that organisations applying for funding are easily able to understand and apply for such opportunities. Lengthy procurement terms and volume of paperwork currently serve to dissuade organisations that need the most support. In addition, the short-term nature of government funding does not allow for longer-term and sustainable planning.

13.8 Inter-community Relations

30. The Local Education Authority is encouraged to establish activities and initiatives which foster deeper relations and dialogue between minority-faith communities, considering it its duty to promote cohesion in schools and building on the example of the intercultural leadership programmes in schools across the UK. These could work from cultural similarities such as family life, food, ethics, values and entertainment. To build these relationships among school-age children may mean a stronger and more cohesive Leicester in the future.
31. The faith communities of Leicester, particularly through the Council of Faiths and the Faith Leaders Forum, could identify ways of furthering the inter-faith dialogue initiatives that already exist and build on the excellent reputation that Leicester has. There is a great potential to go beyond existing work and engage in joint practical initiatives, in order to meet the needs of the disadvantaged, as well as include younger people and more women in inter-faith initiatives.
32. Given the complexity and vibrancy of the faith communities of Leicester, there is a great opportunity for the universities in Leicester to play a more public role in fostering research, education and discussion in religious harmony, cohesion and identity.