



## UK Intercultural Cities Summit

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*Report by Paul Chapman, ICC Expert and Isobel Platts-Dunn, UK ICC Coordinator*

41 participants from 32 different organisations attended the inaugural UK Intercultural Cities Summit in Lewisham, London. 13 London boroughs sent political and officer representatives, alongside the Councils of Kirklees, Bradford and Manchester. There were also delegates working for social enterprise and Age UK representing the third sector, consultants from the private sector, the Local Government Association, the Princes Trust and the Integration Lead from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government covering the national agenda, and Experts from the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities network adding the European dimension to the group.



Mayor of Lewisham, Damien Egan welcomed delegates from local government across London and representatives of three cities from the north of England; Manchester, Bradford and Kirklees who were being formally inducted into the Intercultural Cities network. Mayor Egan reinforced Lewisham's commitment to ICC and particularly the opportunities for transnational exchange of learning and knowledge as a way of building on the promotion of diversity and inclusion in the borough.

Irena Guidikova, Head of Inclusion and Anti-discrimination programmes at the Council of Europe, explained how the promotion of human rights provided the founding principles of the Council of Europe and so were central to the Intercultural Cities programme. She thanked the chair of the Event,

Ted Cante and long time ICC Expert Phil Wood for their role in growing Intercultural Cities, pointing out that they had been promoting the concept in the UK for over 10 years. She also noted how some of the concepts and language used had developed over that time moving towards Intercultural Integration or the 'Art of Mixing'.



As lead of the UK Intercultural Cities Network, Ted Cantle spoke about seeing the growing diversity, the rise in plural identities including mixed heritage, as an opportunity to promote the work of ICC against the populist rhetoric, abuse and incivility. Contact requires people to deal with prejudices and stereotypes across all areas of identity. It builds tolerance and understanding which in turn provides confidence and commitment among practitioners and politicians. The international ICC Network and the new UK Cohesion and Integration Network provides for the sharing of learning and good practice to build expertise.

Lewisham's Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees & Accountability, Cllr Kevin Bonavia presented a short history of Lewisham's participation in ICC over the past 10 years. He talked through the reasons for joining and the ongoing work undertaken by the Council to support and promote equality, diversity and civic engagement; the Lewisham Young Mayor, Local Assemblies and the local Interfaith Network. This was built on by Cllr Jimi Adefiranye who challenged the other borough's present to consider joining ICC, citing the opportunities to learn from good practice across the network and the chance to stay engaged in a wider European discourse on equalities.

Next came the presentations from the three new UK Intercultural Cities, each of which touched on the reasons they felt that membership of ICC both validated their work to date but also helped provide a shared context for the future.

Shabir Pandor, Lead Councillor for Kirklees spoke about linking politics to the reality of his own experience and, that while there was a rise in fears and division, there was also the possibility of linking with the other areas in the room to help develop and stronger local solution. He suggested that cities utilised ICC to develop compelling evidence that shows this works and to create brave, bold and challenging ideas that can then be mainstreamed "My heart is in my community; my passion is the community".

Zahra Niazi the Lead for the Integration Programme in Bradford echoed the Lewisham mantra that 'Our Diversity is Our Strength'. She spoke about the longstanding commitment to community cohesion and the ongoing benefits of resilience and collaboration, arguing that a lack of cultural intelligence was one of the biggest issues but that that personal prejudices could be challenged through engagement and dialogue particularly around practical issues such as integrated public space. She was also realistic in stating that loss and alienation among some of our poorest communities along with weak social and economic infrastructure is an underlying concern.

Finally, Anne Taylor the Strategic Lead of the Neighbourhoods Service in Manchester spoke about the impact of the attack in the city in May 2017. She felt that the renewed focus on community resilience and cohesion, on youth leadership



and young people was key in drawing people together from across diverse communities to think about their commonality. ICC provided access to tried and tested resources, we should not reinvent the wheel – and we do not always have to create new solutions – but we can and should learn from others.

During the event there were also comments, questions and interventions from the audience:

- A plea to look at the role of schools, education and children in addressing an intercultural approach
- The involvement of young people generally, for example, the Prince's Trust has developed a Community Integration Strategy, working specifically on framing interculturality through young people through employment and education.
- The joint issues of race and class and engagement across all members of the community – including the dispossessed 'majority' – in intercultural dialogue.
- The media has played a big role in dividing communities. What will the network do to promote positive stories to media? Similarly, the [Casey Review](#) into Opportunity and Integration (2016) had negative reviews. Is the government changing the perspective?
- We need data to show that the ICC approach also serves the anti-terrorism agenda.
- The ICCities group could also become an advocate on cohesion and integration, for example, to central government on the resources for speakers of English as a second language – the current offer not being good enough.
- How can we learn from the Jo Cox Foundation and others, to help cities to prioritize diversity without needing a tragedy to demand it? Can we anticipate tensions, for example on 'the day after Brexit'.
- Why are some communities under-represented in local government – at both the officer and member level? We need to connect local authorities with civil society organisations.
- Diaspora entrepreneurship is a theme that ICC could work on. SE Asia is the next reservoir of growth; how can we tap into this opportunity?



# Intercultural cities

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- There is a need for partnerships at the local level; councils, colleges, voluntary sector and particularly the business community that is often completely disengaged.
- We also need to recognise needs of the host community, who struggle with coming to terms with change in their areas and work with them to redefine the agenda, reframe the language we use and develop a long term approach.

