

# **Leicester Community Cohesion Evaluation and Assessment Framework**

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**Commissioned by:  
Policy and Performance Team, Chief Executive's Office  
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# The Framework and Indicators

## ***Introduction***

In order to establish a solid and coherent framework for the evaluation and assessment of community cohesion, we have integrated Leicester's approach, the outcomes of our work with organisations and community groups and the Community Cohesion Project Team. All of this is also embedded within the wider national and international debates.

## ***Framework***

The proposed evaluation and assessment framework for community cohesion builds on Leicester's commitment to the wellbeing of communities. It is based on the overarching theme of **Community and Personal Wellbeing**, to encompass 'Social Justice', 'Human Rights', and 'Equality and Diversity'.

Following our consultation, Leicester's approach, and national and international work (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Rajulton et al, 2006), we integrated social cohesion into the components of quality of life and wellbeing and distinguished three essential dimensions inherent in the concept:

1. The Resource/Inclusion dimension
2. The Citizenship dimension
3. The Social Capital dimension.

- The first dimension incorporates the goals of reducing disparities, promoting rights, equal opportunities and combating social exclusion.
- The second deals with proactivity and participation (voting and formal/informal volunteering).
- The third dimension deals with all aspects aiming at strengthening social relations, interactions and ties.

It is important to highlight that the framework is not a community cohesion development framework but an **evaluation and assessment framework**.

## ***Proposed Indicators (Questions)***

Our discussions reflected the fact that social cohesion is a concept difficult to define and to measure. As there can be many definitions, so there can be many measurements. The main problem, either in defining or measuring the concept, is its multilevel and multidimensional nature (Chan et al 2005; Rajulton et al 2006).

Berger-Schmitt (2002) proposes how this concept of social cohesion could be measured within the framework of a European System of Social Indicators. Duhaime et al (2004) use social indicators that measure both behaviour and perceptions. They assert that measuring social cohesion is optimised by combining both culturally-specific and non-specific social indicators. We think that this is something especially relevant to the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural reality of Leicester.

We are also referring to questions which have been used by national surveys in order to have comparable data sets. However, the participants of our workshops and meetings saw some of these questions as inappropriate. This was not only because of the sometimes

difficult language but also because concerns were expressed that some questions do not reflect people's realities and might contribute to the stigmatisation of communities.

After consideration we reached consensus about which questions to include and which to change or leave out.

A key objective was to produce a questionnaire which would be flexible enough for a variety of potential users at different levels through the development of a series of 'core' questions and other questions which would complement the framework.