



## How has Britain's integration debate developed since 2000?

Ethnicity has been the primary lens through which policymakers have viewed integration policy, but policy aims have shifted over the last 18 years. Three objectives stand out and have been priorities at various times:

- harmonious community interaction between immigrants and residents
- reducing barriers to integration
- shifting immigrant behaviour and attitudes to better fit existing economic and societal norms

More recently, there has been a growing emphasis on requiring migrants to "fit in". Furthermore, there has been a shift from central government lead with local implementation to locally-led policy, planning and implementation.

### The policy framework in 1997

In 1997, integration policy followed the "race relations model" developed since 1965: a bi-partisan political settlement with two arms: restriction on immigration and the integration of existing immigrants and their children. The integration policy arm was made up of anti-discrimination law and, following recommendations from government-appointed commissions, incremental change to institutional practice, such as policing methods.

The country's previous immigration experience led to a focus on ethnic diversity which has driven the UK integration agenda ever since. However, after 1997 immigration flows became much larger, more temporary and more diverse, with new communities emerging alongside established ethnic communities. In part due to these changing patterns, but also due to external events and new policy directions set by the Labour government, integration policy has undergone significant change from the race relations model.

### Stephen Lawrence and the Equalities and Human Rights Agenda

The Labour Home Secretary in 1997, Jack Straw, initiated a process that led to a widening focus on equality and human rights laws. The 1998 Human Rights Act enshrined the long-standing European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, reinforcing the existing anti-discrimination framework.

Secondly and in direct response to the Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson) inquiry in 1999, the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act aimed to eradicate institutionalized racism in certain public authorities. Other legislation followed, culminating in the 2010 Equality Act.

However, at no point did the government intend for the advance in rights to increase the integration of immigrants. Indeed, there have been consistent attempts to oppose developments in rights as they apply to immigrants.

### Refugee strategy

The Labour government was unprepared for the spike in asylum numbers and the subsequent Sangatte<sup>1</sup> crisis of 2000-2001 led to asylum being seen as among the most important political issues.

Part of the response, in large measure to balance a more restrictive approach on asylum, was bespoke integration support for recognised refugees. A coherent vision was first set out by the Home Office in 2000 and focused on improving advice. Subsequent policy showed a particular focus on encouraging employment.

The coalition government has been supportive of refugees but there have been significant cuts to advice services and employment training programmes. There is no meaningful refugee integration strategy today.

### Community cohesion

David Blunkett, Home Secretary from 2001, developed community cohesion policy in response to the mill town riots and 9/11. A series of reports, including the main government enquiry, suggested that a major cause of the riots was the segregation of Asian and white communities and recommended initiatives to bring them together.

The policies that followed aimed at encouraging good relations between groups, including summer youth

1. The Sangatte refugee camp in Calais was a lightning rod for media and political attention related to concerns over rising numbers of asylum claimants.

programmes, school-twinning projects, and ethnically mixed housing policies — all largely promulgated at a local level. The current coalition government appears sceptical of this approach, and funding in this area has been cut.

## Volunteering and citizenship

Citizenship and naturalization law and practice has undergone substantial change and marks perhaps the biggest direct impact in immigrant integration policy. Promotion of citizenship began in earnest under Blunkett and his adviser Bernard Crick, who saw “activating” the naturalization process as key integration policy to encourage participation. New policies included citizenship tests, language tests, citizenship ceremonies and increasing the period required before long-term residence rights are acquired.

There also remains a strong emphasis on mentoring and volunteering. The coalition government has continued placing a high value on citizenship. There are also ongoing efforts to encourage volunteering, especially among young people, such as the development of the National Citizenship Service.

## 7/7 and the Commission on Integration

The 2005 7/7 terrorist attacks led to government counter terrorism policy focusing more on domestic “home-grown” terrorism, including measures to tackle potential support for violent extremism within Muslim communities (PREVENT).

The bombings were one of the motivations behind, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in 2006. The Commission sought to balance the interests of immigrant identities with wider concerns about the long-term failure to integrate some settled immigrant communities.

Meanwhile, analysis (and political pressure) from local actors noted the strains and challenges of new and growing immigrant inflows. Local concerns were well captured by the Crossing Borders report published by the Audit Commission.

By broadening the remit beyond Muslim communities, the Commission prompted the government to flirt with introducing a comprehensive integration strategy, encompassing both old and new communities. The Department of Communities and Local Government subsequently mapped existing strategies and projects and introduced funding for local projects in places with significant numbers of new arrivals (the Migration Impacts Fund). Responsibility for integration (except refugee integration) moved in 2007 to CLG from the

Home Office. Ultimately, however, “no clear rationale for developing an integration agency” was found, or for committing extensive funding and capacity to an integration strategy.

Under the coalition, the Migration Impacts Fund has been ended. Its 2012 integration strategy, unlike in other European countries, makes clear that there is no room for national policy and leadership, but that integration is a local concern. Counterterrorism strategy has now shifted firmly towards bringing integration and security policy aims into alignment.

## The big levers still matter

Mainstream government programs and social policies include deliberate correctives to benefit disadvantaged populations. Traditionally this has been applied through area-based grants, with the weighting of programming favouring disadvantaged groups – including minorities and immigrants, who are disproportionately poor. However, immigrant groups have also been “targeted within the mainstream” provision, for instance in education policy.

Put differently, while stand-alone measures have small effects, mainstream programming favours integration as many immigrants and second-generation communities are disproportionate beneficiaries of policies conceived without reference to immigrant integration. The reverse also applies: deleterious effects of public spending reductions (austerity) disproportionately impact on first and second-generation immigrants.

## Conclusion

The coalition government broadly favours continuing a focus on the disadvantaged within policy areas such as education, but has moved away from increased tailoring within mainstream provision. As policymakers do less “targeting within the mainstream” and there are increasing restrictions on access to services for some immigrant groups, certain specific problems will not be addressed coherently.

Successive UK governments, including the current government’s 2012 strategy, have not defined long-term immigrant integration as a discrete public policy challenge. Today, various strands make up integration policy: a clear shift away from what was identifiable as a race relations model in the late 1990s.

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This event was co-organised with the Integration and Faith Division of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and hosted at DCLG’s London office.

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