



## Diversity and integration

**GREATER MANCHESTER is an incredibly diverse county, with a bustling population of 2.8 million people, where over 200 hundred different languages are spoken. I have often joked throughout my year that although my wife Gabrielle and I have been unable to get away on holiday due to our shrieval duties we have enjoyed just about every experience within a 20-mile radius that we could have enjoyed by flying tens of thousands of miles to all those exotic countries across the planet.**

Paul Lee, a former High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, gave me some excellent advice a few months before I started my tenure by suggesting: 'Don't just be busy... anyone can do that. Choose a theme and try to make a real difference.'

For this I took inspiration from my ancestral history – my great grandfather became a British Citizen in 1890 having escaped Jewish persecution in Lithuania and I am eternally grateful to this country for opening its arms to my ancestors and allowing them a homeland and the opportunity to build their lives here. That sense of gratitude has informed my desire to give back to our communities.

Describing myself as a 'fourth generation immigrant' and revealing my theme of 'Diversity and Integration' at my Declaration ceremony in April 2019 (held in my local synagogue), I aimed to bring the two worlds of 1,300 years of the Shrievalty and 3,500 years of Judaism together. It worked beautifully and was an emotional high point for me.

Whether we describe ourselves as 'proud British Jew' (as I did at my installation) or 'proud British Pakistani' or 'proud British Afro-Caribbean', what unites us above all is our innate sense of Britishness. So I have focused my year on reaching out to our various communities, understanding the richness that their individual differences bring to our greater whole. These differences can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical ability, religious belief, political belief or other ideologies.

Diversity highlights of my year have included:

- The UK Chinese Dragon Boat Festival in Salford Quays.
- Meeting the Iraqi Ambassador at the Manchester Consulate of the Republic of Iraq.
- Bhangra dancing (mine!) at the Manchester Mega Mela Festival.
- Cheetham Hill Cultural Festival – visiting the Central Sikh Gurdwara and also the Ukrainian Cultural Centre.
- Black History Month in October and engaging with the Afro-Caribbean Mental Health Trust.
- Mental Health Singing through Triple C – a group promoting disability within the Arts.
- Engaging with the LGBT Foundation.
- Praying in the Neeli Mosque in Rochdale with 500 worshippers on a Friday lunchtime.

I aim to continue this work after my shrieval year finishes. It is my hope that my involvement has helped in some way to bring a greater sense of connection and belonging to these different groups.

Trying to make it so has been my greatest privilege.

**◆ Mark Adlestone OBE DL**  
*High Sheriff of Greater Manchester 2019-20*



Photo: Phil Portus

Mark Adlestone at MACFESTUK at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester celebrating International Women's Day through Culture and Art, together with the organiser Qaisra Shahrzad (centre), his wife Gabrielle Adlestone (to her left) and other attendees