

Tories to court ethnic and religious minority votes

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One of David Cameron's advisors has said that Conservative politicians must do more to attract Muslim and Hindu voters. Andrew Cooper has reportedly identified 30 urban seats with big black or ethnic minority populations that will be needed if the Tories are to be returned in 2015.

The party is looking to Canada for inspiration, where ministers are supposed to report which ethnic minority they have courted each month.

Conservative MPs in this country will now be expected to attend not only Eid and Diwali celebrations but other religious events where they might reach those constituents that traditionally vote Labour.

The Tories seem to have accepted, though, that they cannot look to "community or faith leaders" to deliver bloc votes of religious minorities.

A senior source said: "We have taken the view in the past that we don't need to show our faces and it's enough to go and talk to so called 'community leaders' and they can deliver the votes. But if you look at the 2010 election you can clearly see that didn't work. If you analyse the result from seats like Solihull—which we should have won on the national swing—it shows that our failure to engage with ethnic minority voters was crucial in our failure to win."

Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society, said: "The idea that voters from ethnic and religious minorities can be corralled to vote in one particular way has been shown over and over to be a myth. People from minorities vote on the issues just like everyone else. Very few of them vote according to their religious beliefs or ethnic origins. The Tories are barking up the wrong tree with this one."

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