

VIJAY SHARMA

The former Head of the BBC Asian Network has been appointed Pro-Chancellor for Community Engagement at the University of Leicester.

Dr Vijay Sharma will work to foster greater interconnections between the University, the City of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Dr Sharma has been a long-established member of the University of Leicester community for over 10 years and has had voluntary roles on Philanthropy Board, Audit Committee, as a lay member and Vice-Chair of the University Council. She was also the inaugural Chair of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Board and has helped support numerous University fundraising efforts, particularly in the area of health. She was given an honorary degree for her contribution and service in 2014.

Dr Sharma pioneered the concept of a national public service radio station targeting the Asian diaspora living in Britain within the BBC. She transformed six hours a day radio programming on the local BBC Radio Leicester into an award-winning national digital radio service. The Asian Network is today transmitted around the world and has been instrumental in launching the careers of a number of today's well-known radio and television journalists and personalities.

Dr Sharma is a trained social worker completing her masters in social work from University of Warwick, practicing as a social worker in Nottinghamshire, after undertaking community work at the Foleshill Community Centre, in Coventry.

She was appointed as the first race relations advisor to the chief executive of Leicestershire County Council before joining the BBC Radio Leicester as an education producer. Her brief was to oversee the development of the Asian, African, Caribbean and youth programmes, before being promoted to take charge of developing and extending the Asian programme strand.

During her career, she has undertaken many non-executive director and trustee roles in health, higher education, regional government, probation, the performing arts and charities, for example, Gingerbread, advocating rights of single parents and the Leicester Theatre Trust - Curve.

Dr Sharma served as non-executive director and as vice chair on East Midlands Ambulance NHS Trust for nine years, her term ending in September 2023 (where she chaired the both the workforce committee and the audit committee, was the trust board champion for freedom to speak up and board lead for equality, diversity and inclusion).

She has also been awarded an honorary doctorate degree by De Montfort University and the fellowship of the Radio Academy for her services to broadcasting.