London Liberal Democrats

A guide
to increasing
diversity and inclusion
for local parties

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What are ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’, and why are they important?

For Liberal Democrats, diversity and inclusion are key to our core objective, which is to create a fairer society, one that works for everyone, regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, or any other part of an individual's identity.

Diversity and inclusion are important to any movement seeking to change society. You need to have lots of people on board to succeed, and lots of people will mean lots of different backgrounds, experiences, views, and ideas.

As Liberal Democrats, we strive to ensure our party is open to all, and that we are fully and truly reflective of the diverse nature of our membership, the electorate, and the citizens of our country.

Having an inclusive culture within the party is a vital part of achieving this aim. That means ensuring that each and every opportunity to be involved in the party’s activities and representation is open to everyone – always!

Getting and keeping lots of people means being open to different ideas about how that change can be achieved, as well understanding what effects achieving it will have on different individuals, groups, and/or communities. And where these changes for diversity unfairly or disproportionately impact upon particular groups and individuals etc., it is important we mitigate such loss and or negativity - where possible.

As London Liberal Democrats we have to reach out to all of our city’s myriad groups and communities. We need to ensure that we understand them, connect with them and involve them in our activities.

And equally important is our need to create opportunities for Londoners from whatever background, who share our commitment to a fairer society, to become party members - even if that means challenging some of our ways of working, or rethinking some of our approaches to campaigning.

This short guide is written to give London party members, wherever you are in ‘the structure’, information and knowledge to enable you to advocate for better inclusion and to be the welcoming representatives of our great party for equality.

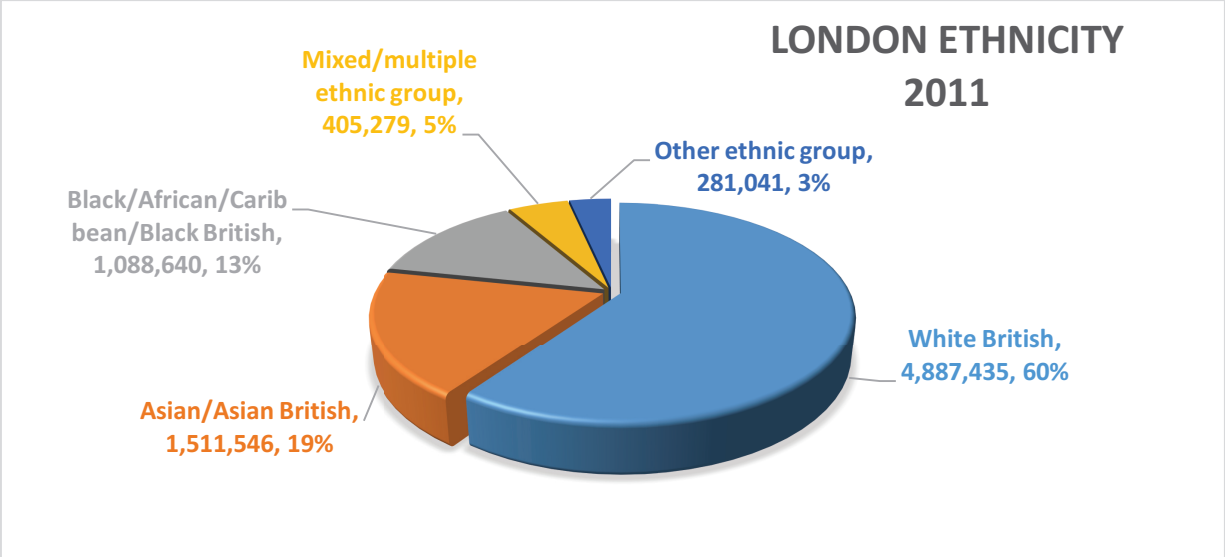
The rest is up to you!

Some basic facts about London's diversity

Our city is one of the most diverse in the world, with over 8.7 million people living within the greater London area, an area of 1,583 square kilometres or 611 square miles.

Of that population, at the last census (2011), 36.7% recorded themselves as being foreign-born; including 24.5% born in a non-European country. That gives London the second largest immigrant population behind New York City in absolute numbers.

The ethnic mix of our citizens is very rich, and while at the last census nearly 60% of the population identified as White British, that also included people of Welsh, Scots and Northern Irish origin.



London's visible and non-visible ethnic minority communities include many such as:

Arab	Greek	Korean
Bangladeshi	Indian	Nigerian
Chinese	Irish	Pakistani
German	Jamaican	Turkish
Ghanaian	Japanese	

In terms of communication, 77.9% of the population gave English as their primary language, with 19.8% giving it as their second language. Conversely, 3.5% said they couldn't speak English well, and only 0.6% indicated that they couldn't speak English at all.

As for which other languages people spoke, after English, these are:

2	Polish	9	Spanish	16	Persian/Farsi
3	Bengali	10	Arabic	17	Lithuanian
4	Gujarati	11	Tamil	18	German
5	French	12	Punjabi	19	Greek
6	Urdu	13	Somali	20	Russia
7	Portuguese	14	Italian		
8	Turkish	15	Romanian		

Considerations of London's diversity in politics should go beyond ethnicity and language. In seeking to engage with London's population, it's vital that we also understand and engage with issues of age, gender, sexuality, and ability.

Age

Our city, and especially its inner areas, has very different profile to other British cities. In 2014, 25% of inner London's population were aged 25 to 34, with 16% in outer London. Inner London has more 25 to 29-year-olds, and outer London more 30 to 34-year-olds.

We have a high-level of young adults starting families and a high proportion of children aged 0 to 4, with outer London having more children aged under 14. We also have proportionally fewer people aged over 50 than other UK cities, especially in inner London.

Gender

While it's difficult to extrapolate, at the last census, women outnumbered men at the UK population level. Recent surveys have recorded seven of London's boroughs having higher numbers of female residents. Estimates from Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimated in 2009 that the UK's transgender population might be around 0.09% of the population, a figure which is likely to be larger in London.

Sexuality

The most recent Office for National Statistics figures has 2.6% of Londoners describing themselves as being gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Disability

According to the Mayor's Office, in 2012 there were around 1.5 million people living with some form of impairment or long-term illness that limited their ability to be active.

Why are diversity and inclusion important for local parties?

People are the life-blood of our party. Without members, volunteers, and supporters we are unlikely to achieve success - no matter how brilliant our policies.

Similarly, local parties are the building blocks of our regional and federal operations and successes and they too need diverse members.

In London, local parties are responsible for fielding candidates for local council and parliamentary elections. In collaboration with London Regional, local parties are also key to fighting the Mayoral and Greater London Assembly contests every four years.

For our local parties to be effective, they need to be connected to their local communities. And to be connected, they need to be reflective - whether that be geographical, ethnic, or reflective along other shared characteristics, such as sexuality or disability.

And if we are to fully reflect London's population we need to not just be connecting with its many communities, we need to be encouraging them to see us as the only party that can improve their lives and realise their goals for themselves their families. Ultimately, we need our fellow Londoners to see our party as the vehicle to achieving that shared vision of London for everyone!

Creating that support and turning these aspirations into vote's means making sure that we are connected to people at the local level, even if the issues that they are concerned with are national.

Local parties are often the tangible point of contact that people have with real live Lib Dems. As much as they may see our MPs and Peers in the media, it will be the contact that they have with local party members that influences their decision about whether to get involved with, rather than support our party.

Once people have made a choice to get involved local parties need to create opportunities for them to develop and succeed as party members, in whatever roles or activities they wish to adopt. And that's why being open and inclusive is important for local parties.

To be successful, local parties need to harness the knowledge, skills, and experiences of all of their members, so that they can reach out to as many people as possible in the communities they are seeking to represent.

Diversity and inclusion are two sides of the same coin. Ignore one and you will fail at the other, but succeed at both and your local party will reap electoral rewards.

What do local parties need to know?

If everything that you've just read feels a little overwhelming, don't worry. As a local party member or officer, you've already started the journey towards making your local party more inclusive and diverse and connecting it better with your local communities, and your voters.

But as with any journey it's always good to make a plan, so here are a few things that it's important to have on yours.

1. ***Information about your membership***

   Have an annual membership survey – either paper or electronically.

   Make it anonymous. As well as asking about what people want to do, ask them some basic demographic information, including their age, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. You'll probably have a few refusals, but if you explain why you're asking, you'll be surprised at the response rates.

   When engaging in communities, allow people the chance to give you their details, as many people are happy to share their information. Knowing people who may connect you with specific groups or communities can help you with the stages of the plan.

2. ***Information about your local communities***

   Check out the census data for the area your party covers. Find out the different ethnic groups living in the area. Map out the different communities identified in the data, especially those with defined community services, such as community groups or centres.

   Map out any other community services, such as faith centres or meeting places for other groups, such a LGBT+ people, who may use specific places or services.

3. ***Important dates for your communities***

   Now you know the key diversity information about your party membership and your local populace, find out key dates and celebrations that connect with them and add them to your campaign calendar, so that you can organise activities on or around them.

4. ***Intelligence on what the opposition are up to***

   We might have all the answers, but never overlook the possibility that the other political parties have a better understanding of the challenges or problems. Look at their campaigns and events and see if they've picked up on issues or concerns that your local party needs to be active on.

What can local parties do to improve engage with your communities?

Data and information are really helpful in gaining a sense of what your local community looks like, but once you have the intelligence, its only useful if you do something with it.

To make the best use of local data you need to have a plan of action, and be mindful of some key issues:

1. ***Make sure your literature is accessible***

   Write your literature in accessible English. And if there are enough people speaking another language locally, look at translating your material. Choose photographs and imagery that best reflect the diversity of your local party and your local community.

2. ***Diversity your web presence***

   As with your literature, make sure your online presence reflects the diversity of your local party, the people you're seeking to engage with, and the people you aspire to represent.

   Use your social media platforms to engage with local community groups and representatives and, and use the calendar of key dates and celebrations as a guide to posting supportive messages and related Liberal Democrat policy information on key dates for the communities and groups in your area.

3. ***Go where the people are***

   With your map of community, spaces and centres, plan your campaigning and canvassing activities around them. On key dates and occasions, ensure you attend community events and offer to provide support or speakers.

4. ***Invite the community to you***

   Not all Liberal Democrats events have to be member's only. Run events that are open to the public, and promote them in your literature and on your online platforms.

   Think about the people you invite to speak, and consider how your speakers demonstrate your commitment to engaging with the diversity of your local populations.

   And don't forget to ask for feedback and use it to improve how you do future events!

5. ***Don't be afraid to go out there and engage with your communities!***

What can local parties do to improve diversity in membership?

In many ways, everything else in this guide has been preparation for this section. As much as we'd prefer it not to be the case, our party, especially in London, is not reflective of our country's diversity.

Sometimes it may seem like a 'chicken and egg' situation, as to have a membership that is truly reflective of the range and breadth of people living in our country, and even more importantly our city, we need to engage with the communities that they come from.

But without members from those communities, it can be hard to be convincing about our commitment to them.

However, that is to miss the good story we have to tell about our party's commitment to supporting and engaging with ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, people living with disabilities, and other minority and disenfranchised groups. And of course, as this guide demonstrates the commitment we have to improve the diversity of our party.

Your task as a local party is to turn those commitments into practical actions and campaigns, and here are some ideas for how you can do that.

1. ***Create an action plan for engagement***

   You should have noticed that we've referred to an action plan in the last two section.

   Every local party should have a campaign plan, usually focusing on the one or more targets wards that it is campaigning in. Your 'engagement action plan' should fit under that plan.

   As with your campaign plan, give it objectives and targets for how you will connect with local communities and groups, and give it timescales and reviews.

   And don't forget to include open public events, which you can use both to engage with your local communities, and to recruit new members!

2. ***Use your membership survey***

   Ask your members for suggestions, and encourage them to suggest how to promote our existing achievements within diversity.

3. ***Challenge your Executive Group***

   If your Exec doesn't look like your community, challenge them to address that. Most Execs have spare places, so push them to co-opt people to make it more diverse and more reflective of the community where it operates.

4. ***Invest in the future***

   Get your Executive to spend money on training for members, especially on how to get elected. Ensure members from under-represented groups are encouraged and supported to attend.

5. ***Work across boundaries***

   Look to see where you can work with neighbouring local parties to celebrate and champion key dates and festivities, such as Black History Month, LGBT+ History Month, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Eid, etc.,

   If you're a small local party with limited resources, talk to your neighbour parties about co-hosting events and holding campaigning activities.

6. ***Hold regular public events***

   Public events are a really great way to connect with the people in your local community and they can also be great ways to recruit.

   Target your events at issues that you know will resonate with local groups and communities. And make sure they're well promoted **and accessible**.

Some key terms and further contacts

Terms acronyms applicable to diversity and inclusion

BME	Black & Minority Ethnic	May also appear as 'ME'
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender	May also be 'LGB'
BHM	Black History Month	Takes place every October
LGBTHM	LGBT History Month	Takes place every February

Further contacts

Chinese Liberal Democrats - CLD was formed to promote closer links between the Party and the Chinese and South East Asian community in the UK.
See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/cld

Liberal Democrat Disability Association - campaigns within the party to ensure that disability is thought about rather than being an afterthought.
See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/liberal_democrat_disability_association

Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats –exists to promote minority ethnic representation within the party, to represent all ethnic minority members and to advance policies that address issues which disproportionately impact on those communities.
See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/emld

LGBT+ Lib Dems - is the Liberal Democrats' party organisation committed to promoting the policies of sexual and gender minorities - including gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people - and to ensuring that the party's policies address their needs.
See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/lgbt

Liberal Democrat Women – the Women's Organisation of the Liberal Democrats, working to eliminate all discrimination based on gender.
See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/ldw

Liberal Youth - the youth and student wing of the Lib Dems. It operates independently from the party with its own policy platform, events, training and campaigns.
See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/liberal_youth

Federal Party Diversity Team - the staff team for supporting and delivering diversity and inclusion work across the Federal Party.
See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/diversity