



# Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025

Our job as a political party is to represent people right across England, Scotland and Wales.

Our history shows that we do that best when we listen to people, and understand their hopes and concerns. The Liberal Democrats have a hard-earned reputation for good community politics: knocking on doors, talking to people about their lives, and helping them take action. It's how we win peoples' confidence and votes, and how we run good, effective councils that respond to people's needs.

Our beliefs are founded on the idea of empowering people to live their lives in the way they want, giving them the opportunities and safety they need to flourish.

These two strands of our identity - street level community politics and a deep commitment to empowerment - mean that representing and listening to everyone, from every social identity group, is vital to our success.

In some areas and places, we are making good progress. Things are changing, thanks to the dedication and hard work of people right across our party. More than half of our Westminster Parliamentarians identify as female, and 15 per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Overall, our candidates are twice as likely to be from ethnic minority backgrounds as our membership.

But we still have a long way to go. We want our members to thrive in an environment where everyone is welcome and supported. Our country is changing, and we need to change alongside it.

This strategy shows how we'll do that.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Mike Dixon', is located below the text.

**Mike Dixon**

**CEO, Liberal Democrats**



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## Introduction

Diversity refers to a broad range of visible and non-visible differences that characterise individuals. It is important that a firm philosophy drives any development of services for individuals and communities, ensuring that quality of service is both accessible and appropriate.

We believe that to move towards an inclusive organisation it is essential that we engage individuals from different backgrounds and all walks of life and enable them to work with us and support us; for our benefit as well as theirs. We need systems that are transparent and fair.

Action on equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) forms an integral part of our vision for the Liberal Democrats, not only in achieving a make-up that reflects the changing society we serve, but also in improving organisational capacity to deliver through valuing and making the best use of the diversity of talent in teams, departments and membership.

We want to use change at the top to lead broader change in the way EEDI is managed and valued in the Liberal Democrats at all levels and across all equality and diversity characteristics.

EEDI is a mainstream issue. To succeed we must make it part of the Party's day-to-day life. EEDI, what it means, what its effects are, and how it can make the Liberal Democrats more successful must be on the agenda at all levels and in all areas of our Party.

## Vision

The Liberal Democrats believe in a modern Britain of genuine openness and equality without exception. We champion a society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect irrespective of their background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or any other part of an individual's identity.

We have a long and proud history of standing up for what is right; we are the party that successfully fought for same-sex marriage, gender pay gap reporting, we restored grants to help people with disabilities to run for public election and ensured that up skirting was outlawed. But the fight does not stop there, today we are challenging the gender pay -gap, fighting to prevent another Windrush Scandal and proudly standing up for Trans rights. Diversity and Inclusion are right at the heart of our constitution, which you can read [here](#).



## Purpose

To this end Diverse Matters (DM) has conducted an audit which builds on four previous reports that have also reviewed how the Liberal Democrats can move closer towards turning the vision into reality. Delivery of the strategy is the responsibility of the CEO and all Directors, alongside the leadership roles within the party. There are a number of key areas that require action to demonstrate both commitment and positive intention to deliver a more equitable and inclusive party.

Previous reports have consistently highlighted issues that need to be addressed without implementation.

- The Helena Morrissey Report, Process and Culture within the Liberal Democrats and recommendations for change, an Independent Inquiry -2013
- The Alderdice Report - Race, Ethnic Minorities and the Culture of the Liberal Democrats- 2018.
- The 2019 Election Review Report. This Report was commissioned in 2020 to reflect on Diversity considerations as a result of the 2019 Election.
- The Federal People Development Committee (FPDC) Report – Diversity “Deep Dive”, April 2020. This report was commissioned to update the new Chair of the FPDC and new members, an internal self-assessment of the Party's Diversity activities was conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, silos, barriers and gaps.

There has been no lack of reports and the key theme that is reiterated in each report is that no strategic or real Diversity objectives have been set and/or taken place. Overall, there is a lack of clear structure and reporting lines and no central repository of resources or place for groups or individuals to share information.

It is now crucial that a strategy is implemented, resourced and monitored. This strategy confirms the observations of previous reviews and amalgamates previous recommendations with some additional objectives. The strategy includes required actions to achieve the strategy.

Without implementation the Party will not achieve its vision and grow both greater diverse membership across society and ultimately votes. This will require a culture change which mirrors a paradigm shift in societal attitudes, a challenge to the traditional ‘male’ models of leadership and real engagement of people at all levels of the Party to promote and implement the EEDI agenda.



## Business Case

In any organisation the term cultural may refer to the major values at work within the organisation. In other words, these are often referred to as the 'organisational ethos' or 'our values'.

The organisational culture encompasses the dominant management style active in the organisation and in turn this impact on whether this style is inclusive or not. The values embodied in the culture of the organisation usually focus on relationships with employees, membership, external stakeholders and with local communities, together with the definition and attitude towards quality, safety and ethical values. Some of these behaviours may be written down; however, most of them are implied in behaviour.

Diversity is not just about recognising difference; it is about ensuring that policy and services consider that difference. Diversity, within our society, is a source of great strength and should be viewed as such.

Viewed and addressed in the right way, diversity not only gives a positive edge to service delivery, but also makes good business sense. It ensures clear lines of communication and offers meaningful partnership through local input and dialogue, thus resulting in several successful outcomes. These include:

**Financial benefits** – We will be able to use our resources more effectively. This will be particularly important in terms of ensuring that we are using resources in ways that are filling gaps and have an impact, as opposed to doing what we think is right - which is not the same as what our different communities think is right.

**Process benefits** - We will be able to use procurement and the contractual processes to leverage positive behaviours and ensure that as a result of our internal processes there will be robust mechanisms in place to positively impact on minority businesses/communities, changing demographics and overall local economy.

**Proficient workforce** - Not only will we be able to meet our aspirations in relation to recruitment, but we will also be in a position to recruit 'the best' from a wide pool of individuals in all areas of the Party – employees, members, candidates, MPs. We will be able to harness the skills of individuals from diverse backgrounds in service delivery, ensuring continual progress and development.



**Enhanced satisfaction** - No community is 'homogenous.' This is what diversity is about and as a Party to be effective and successful we need to focus on this difference across all stakeholders and communities. Acknowledged and positively served, The Liberal Democrats can increase the confidence of local communities, which in turn will resolve local, regional, and national issues which may arise.

Effective community engagement and consultation also supports organisational changes, particularly cultural changes impacting on how services are managed and delivered. This in turn has a significant benefit not only to members of the public, but also employees morale and confidence.

**Local success and National recognition** - As a Party which is aspiring to progress further, embedding EEDI throughout the Liberal Democrats will ensure that we will not only meet our legislative requirements, but also influence outcomes of policy decisions and inspections in a positive way.

The flexible approach needed to manage EEDI effectively, in terms of responsiveness, managing change and continuous learning from individuals of different backgrounds, will keep the Liberal Democrats evolving and better able to meet ever-increasing demands to improve performance in other areas.

## Our Journey

This strategy will require commitment, resourcing and monitoring to ensure priorities are met and more importantly that the interventions are achieving measurable outcomes. Whilst we will continue to address discrimination for all people with protected characteristics, we will focus for the first four years of the strategy on greater inclusion of Black and Asian people and people with disabilities. We recognise these categories are not mutually exclusive and the issue of intersectionality needs to be part of the diversity lens we apply.



# Key priority areas

## Internally

- To agree a Liberal Democrat definition of EEDI so that consistency exists with regards to meaning, interpretation and understanding how we will achieve the vision.
- Ensure the strategic direction of EEDI and all resulting actions are driven by a joint working group that is representative of the Party and/or key stakeholders. This will make certain that commitment to EEDI is at the forefront of planning and organising and that a proactive approach is adopted to achieving EEDI objectives.
- Conduct a full review of recruitment and selection practises for members, candidates and employees across the Party.
- Recruit from a diverse, qualified group of potential applicants to secure a high-performing workforce drawn from all segments of society.
- To enhance representation of members, candidates MP's from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Disabled communities.
- To enhance representation and diversity of employees.
- To ensure that the Liberal Democrats is an inclusive Party where all employees and membership can fulfil their potential and feel confident that their unique perspectives and talents will be valued. This in turn will help to cultivate a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to contribute to their full potential and further retention. Enhancing behavioural and cultural change across the Party is a key priority.
- To develop the Party's processes so it can demonstrate its enhanced inclusive practice that is attractive to potential voters.



## Externally

- Ensure leadership demonstrates its commitment and accountability for modelling behaviour that advances diversity and inclusion, across all regions, through the governance and accountability processes and through a deep understanding of what diversity and inclusion means to the Party.
- Cultivate and promote an inclusive culture among voters, staff and members of the Liberal Democrats that maximises talent, skills, and diversity.

Embedding EEDI is an ongoing process and it is never 'done'. There are always emerging issues and developments which will mean the Party will be required to take further action to enhance its practice. There are many actions that the Party needs to embed EEDI, but we recognise by implementing actions this will make us more inclusive and effective.

## Strategic intent

To address the key areas, a set of objectives have been developed to focus the Liberal Democrats in embedding actions required to enhance EEDI practice.

## Objectives

**Objective 1** - Increase diversity across the Liberal Democrat party in HQ and all areas (state, region and local parties) of the party with a specific focus on diversity of candidates and in particular Black and Asian people and Disabled people (and other underrepresented communities). To improve recognition that we are the natural home for these voters.

**Objective 2** - Embed and build capability and understanding of EEDI practice and enhance learning across all functions of the party through the governance and accountability and structures

**Objective 3** - External positioning of Liberal Democrats, Diversity and inclusivity with the voters and the community ensuring consistency of terminology and language.

**Objective 4** – Attraction and development / progression of capability and pipeline of members, potential votes, candidates, MP's employees and leadership.

To achieve the objectives the following actions and priorities should be implemented. However, the entire strategy is predicated on agreeing a Liberal Democrat definition of EEDI I so that consistency exists with regards to meaning, interpretation and





understanding, and ensuring the strategic direction of EEDI and all resulting actions are driven by a joint working group that is representative of the Party and/or key stakeholders. This will make certain that commitment to EEDI is at the forefront of planning and organising and that a proactive approach is adopted to achieving EEDI goals.

To support Liberal Democrats implementation of EEDI practice, the required actions to support the objectives cover the following areas:

- Data/Information and performance
- Recruitment
- Progression
- Behavioural and Cultural change
- Membership/candidate development
- Leadership development
- Employee engagement and development
- Strategic community engagement
- Accountability and governance