



## **LALG Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Annual Report**

**2023/2024**

### **Introduction**

Reflecting on the last couple of years as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer for LALG, I am pleased with the amount of work that has been done to align Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity within the organisation and strengthen our EDI priorities moving forward to 2024/2025.

The activity we have undertaken has enabled us to gain a better understanding of where the gaps are, and the key actions required. What is evident is that this is not possible with the committee acting alone and we require the support of the wider LALG community including group leaders and all members. This EDI report details the gradual improvement in EDI activity at LALG since 2021, the recent survey results, workshop findings and realistic recommendations for the next year.

I am personally proud of the committee's ongoing efforts to raise awareness of EDI, encouraging open discussion and providing spaces where group leaders and members can provide their input. As we have found, talking about EDI can be challenging, many are not used to talking about EDI, may not have the confidence to do so or may not think it necessary. However, we can clearly see encouraging open dialogue has increased confidence with only 15 responses to the EDI survey in 2023 compared to 162 responses earlier this year.

### **In terms of key EDI activity this last year:**

- 1) EDI policy review and update on 21<sup>st</sup> May, available on the website [here](#)
- 2) Strategy Workshop 16<sup>th</sup> March
- 3) EDI Workshop was held on 9<sup>th</sup> May to provide details of EDI and best practices for Group contacts
- 4) EDI survey throughout June, available via the website and paper forms at David's Bookshop

### **EDI Policy**

#### **What is EDI and why do we have an EDI Policy?**

EDI stands for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and simply, EDI ensures fair treatment, equal opportunity and no-one is treated differently or discriminated against **because of their personal characteristics.**

We have an EDI policy to ensure we have a practice in place and promote a culture that values and celebrates differences, ensures fairness and prevents discrimination. It highlights that LALG is a safe and inclusive environment where we are aligning with legal and moral rules. EDI policies can help prevent serious, legal issues and provide guidance, such as on bullying, harassment and discrimination.

The EDI Policy is checked and reviewed annually by the committee. The policy is available on the LALG website and can be accessed by all members.

### **Strategy Workshop led by LALG committee on 16<sup>th</sup> March, Findings**

Breakout sessions on tables with different topics, one table was set up for EDI discussion.

During the breakout sessions, only three group contacts spoke with the EDI Officer, it was evident Group contacts do not want to talk about EDI or do not feel comfortable talking about EDI. The EDI officer was asked what EDI stands for and together with the wider discussion and issues raised, it was also obvious Group contacts do not understand what their role is in terms of EDI. Group contacts expressed example problems faced by them and seemed to be dealing with individual problems rather than strategically planning to ensure inclusivity and equality for all catering for individual characteristics. For example, one Group contact was asked to carry an oxygen cylinder on a walk and then when the member did not want to continue, someone had to go back with them. Good EDI practice does not mean carrying oxygen cylinders and turning back with the member, it's more about ensuring all members are aware of the walk difficulty and information is provided beforehand so that those that may have special needs can address them and any feasible changes can be made. Many groups have stayed as the same people for years and had not considered content or reaching out for new members. Further data is required on membership demographic and further training on how groups can be more inclusive. It was suggested each group should have their own guidelines about EDI, good practice and expectations which are given to each group member. Workshops and a survey were suggested to gather more data.

### **EDI workshop led by Aman Dhillon, EDI Officer on 9<sup>th</sup> May, Findings**

EDI officer gave a 40-minute presentation about EDI, what this means, why it's important and how to apply best practices at LALG. This was the first of a number of planned workshops for Group contacts and was generally received well. There was a good turnout of around 15 people. The feedback was positive, and Group contacts seemed to have a better understanding of EDI, were encouraged to be confident when addressing EDI and thought how best to apply good practice within their groups. The goal was to educate on EDI, show how Group contacts can think about EDI practices strategically and think about accessibility and inclusion for all rather than feeling like they have a responsibility to deal with individual member problems.

There is a need for a regular reminder to Group contacts to encourage good EDI practices within their group and wider LALG. For them to have open discussions with the EDI officer and lean on them and the committee for support. Regular workshops are a good way to encourage engagement and get everyone's involvement. Feedback in safe informal environments/workshops maybe better than conducting a survey. Please see recommendations below.

## **EDI Survey Findings**

We have a membership of 1665 households, therefore approximately 2662 individual members. There were only 15 responses to the 2023 survey and therefore with a lack of results compared with the membership number, we concluded that the results were invalid. The committee had decided we would need at least 100 survey responses to the 2024 survey. Thank you to the 162 people that completed the EDI survey in June 2024. The data was analysed against local census and local insight profile (2024).

The EDI Survey asked 7 questions that the committee felt were appropriate in terms of assessing we were meeting the needs of our existing members and results that would enable us to compare to local data and plan forward our marketing activity to encourage additional and wider membership.

There are 34,318 people living in Letchworth Garden City, of which the majority of 20,741 are aged between 16-64 and 6,969 are aged 65+ with slightly more females (52%) compared to men (48%). The survey respondents were 60% female and as expected the majority were aged 60+. This clearly shows some work can be done to increase our membership and especially aimed towards the 20,741 aged between 16-64. A growing concern for the committee is the need to engage younger people/ members to ensure the success and continuation of LALG.

3% of the Letchworth population identify as not straight or heterosexual and with 4% of our respondents selecting Bisexual/Gay we can see our membership does include members from the LGBTQIA+ community. 15 had either selected prefer to self-describe, prefer not to say or left blank.

Letchworth has geographical areas with higher-than average numbers of youth unemployment and economic inactivity; the town has higher than English national average rates of disability recorded in under 25's. Letchworth has 30% social housing, compared with a national average of 18%. Whilst we did not ask question relating to economic background/ low-income household to our members, it can be useful to have an understanding of this locally and an awareness for Group contacts when planning activities and events. There may be economic barriers that exist that reduce engagement and accessibility.

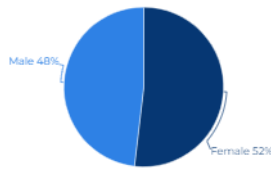
With regard to disability, we asked if there was a *disability preventing you from taking part in LALG activity*, whilst the majority said no, there was a common link with a number of comments about wanting shorter walks, suffering from fatigue and wanting online activity.

In terms of ethnicity, whilst the majority (26,685) are White British, there are a significant number of Non-White ethnicity (5,409), Asian (2,360) and Black (1,053). The town has a higher than English national average population Sikh/South Asian communities, and dual heritage ('White and Black Caribbean'/'White and Black African') ethnic groups. Considering this only three people selected South Asian ethnicity, one Asian ethnicity, one Mixed and three selected prefer not to say. The majority selected White British from what we know of the LALG membership, we clearly need to increase our engagement with local Non-White ethnicities.

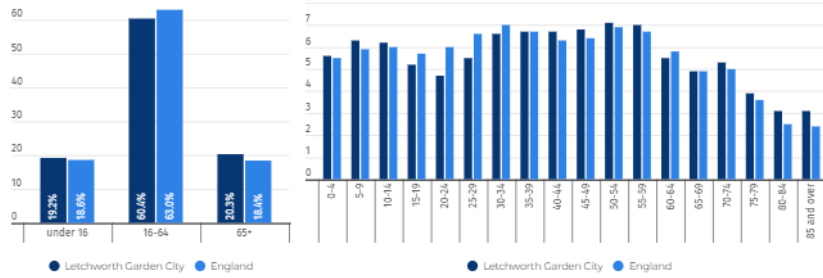
## **Top line demographic data – Letchworth Garden City (2021)**

## Letchworth's population (1)

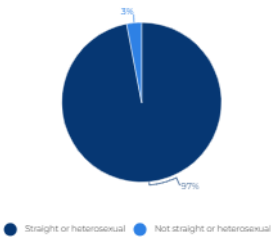
### Sex



### Age



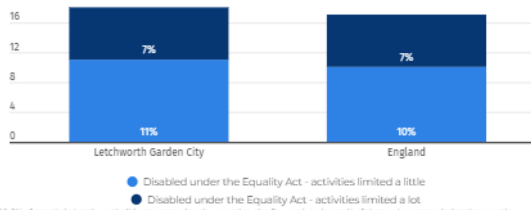
### Sexual orientation\*



### Gender identity\*\*

99.6%  
percentage of people in Letchworth who responded to the question said their gender identity was the same as sex registered at birth

### Disability



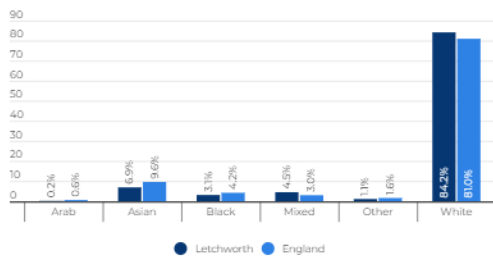
Source: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

\*Census 2021 sexual orientation question was voluntary for those over 16. Of those who responded, 97% were straight or heterosexual, 3% were not straight or heterosexual. 7% of people in Letchworth did not respond to the question.

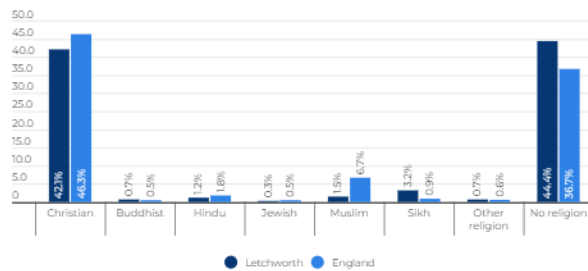
\*\*Census 2021 gender identity question was voluntary for those over 16. 5% of people in Letchworth did not respond to the question, the figure given is as a % of those who responded to the question.

## Letchworth's population (2)

### Ethnicity - top level

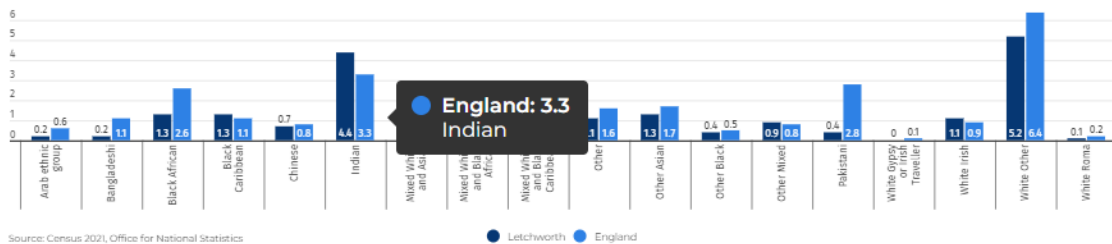


### Religion



### Ethnicity - detail

Graph shows all ethnic groups excluding White British (77.8% of Letchworth's population and 73.5% of England) for legibility.



Source: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

We asked where members look for local events and the LALG website seemed to be most commonly selected and there seemed to be an even number of both online (website, social media) and in person engagement with newsletter and David's bookshop.

To keep the comments confidential, I have not added details from the comments section here but out of the 162 respondents, we had 7 people comment that they did not feel the survey was useful and felt that by having an EDI survey was in itself discriminatory and did not want to be put in to tick boxes. These comments were discussed, and EDI workshops aim to address why EDI data is useful and required. The majority of responses said that they wished us luck with the survey, asked for more information about how we were comparing the data and also there were a number of comments about member experiences in groups and with inclusion – this clearly shows many

wanted to talk about their own experiences with EDI and were confident in doing so. Further work is required to address these comments.

The intention was to repeat this survey annually to see how well LALG is achieving its aim of reaching people across the ranges of ability, age, ethnicity and gender but some further thought is needed on how this survey is conducted as from the lack of responses and comments, this does not seem the most effective way to engage with members and gather details. Please see recommendations.

### **Marketing (online and in person) and events – what we have been doing:**

- In addition to the 900 newsletter paper copies distributed to members, we get another 300-400 per month that committee member William Armitage distributes to a number of outlets in Letchworth Garden City and surrounding areas. This includes, David's bookshop, the library, the cinema etc.
- LALG is named on the Letchworth Doctors Social Prescribing list and newsletters are displayed at surgeries.
- LALG activity is advertised through our website, our own newsletters, posters, social media, emails to members, the Letchworth Festival programme and news outlets like The Comet newspaper.
- Local events and exhibition - in December 2022 there was a 35 years of LALG anniversary exhibition at Broadway Gallery and a number of events we have had the LALG stall up at including the Letchworth Green Festival, Fairfield Apple Day Fair, Hitchin Festival, Royston Festival, Stotfold Steam Fair and Baldock Fireworks.
- There are a number of group activities on at different times of the day to be accessible for those that have different working/childcare commitments. Some talks are online.
- Diversity in group content - visiting churches went to Cambridge Mosque a couple of years ago, they have a programme of religious places they visit to look at architectural and historical context rather than religious. Fairfield Book Group have a number of books from overseas authors or about experiences of people with roots from overseas.
- Last year we had identified local ethnic groups and festivals celebrated and were adding details to the website homepage but committee decided against any references to religion.
- In the past we have had data analytics from our social media platforms. These can give us a good indication of online reach, from where we receive our most engagement (this can be broken down to Letchworth, Hitchin, Stevenage, Baldock, Royston etc) and also which posts receive most engagement. This can give us details of what type of activities might be particularly enjoyed and can help with future programming. We can also see if our existing members are using online social media platforms and also if that works as a marketing tool for new membership. Data from those engaging online with LALG, can also be broken down to Gender, Age group.

For example here is some data from December 2021:

## Demographics

	Platform	Type	Gender		Age					
			M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Dec 21	Facebook	Fans	23%	77%	3%	12%	22%	21%	18%	22%
	Instagram	Followers	26%	74%	3%	19%	31%	24%	14%	7%
	Website	Reached	44%	56%	4%	11%	20%	19%	21%	24%

## Suggested Marketing strategy 2024/2025

- Identify local community groups/ ambassadors and provide details of LALG/ drop off newsletters
- Attend local community events/ fairs to pitch LALG groups and discounters.
- Actively call out people to suggest groups they would be interested in and ask if there are any barriers to them joining.
- Enlist the help of Group Contacts i.e. to promote their group wider, have they had the same members for a number of years, have they considered the group content to be more inclusive and diverse if it can be?
- Regular social media posts celebrating events/ group activity that has taken place and call out for new members tagging in local groups
- Regular press releases circulated to local press, influencers and think about local community newsletters, press and media platforms they read/watch/listen to – can we publicise there?

## Recommendations

- New EDI officer or team of EDI officers/ sub-committee to be appointed when Aman Dhillon steps down at the October AGM.
- Meeting arranged with Group contacts, strengthen relationship between EDI officer and Group contacts to discuss and consider EDI. Group contacts to have a guidance page on EDI considering the survey results and comments. Perhaps survey could be done with each group with an option not to take part to ensure more respondents. Or rather than a survey, there could be more workshops with an opportunity to speak and answer questions relating to EDI so that the committee/ EDI officer can take notes and consider afterwards.
- Regular information about EDI on the website and in the newsletter (quotes can be thought-provoking, positive and great for engagement) and signposts to EDI officer.
- Encouraging open dialogue and confidence when talking about EDI, marking occasions like Inclusion week – details can be found here: <https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/national-inclusion-week/> (the EDI officer could join Inclusive Employers and also take part in a number of free courses/ workshops available online).
- Think about diverse platforms and community groups/ organisations to advertise LALG activity and newsletters.
- The committee to look for additional committee members keeping diversity in mind and promoting vacancies specifically to diverse groups.