

Partners for Brent

Community Consultation, Engagement
& Empowerment

STRATEGY

2010-2014



Community Engagement and Empowerment A Partnership Strategy for Brent

Foreword from Partners from Brent

Forward from Partners for Brent

Welcome to Partners for Brent's Community Consultation, Engagement and Empowerment strategy 2010 – 2014. This is a partnership framework document which sets out our priorities and ambitions for how we will consult with, engage and involve our respective stakeholders in all aspects of the services we provide, from design through to delivery. The strategy also sets out our minimum quality standards for consultation and engagement activity and outlines our commitment to making consultation and engagement a partnership endeavour for Brent.

Chair of the Brent Local Strategic Partnership

What is the Local Strategic Partnership?

The Brent local strategic partnership, (Partners for Brent) is a partnership that brings together a range of organisations within the public, private, community and voluntary sectors responsible for delivering services at a local level.

The key values of Partners for Brent are:

- To deliver efficient, accessible and sustainable services to excellent standards;
- To develop tailored solutions to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities;
- To celebrate the Borough's diversity and build upon our national reputation for nurturing successful community cohesion.

Effective engagement and the involvement of all our stakeholders is a key factor in ensuring that Partners for Brent is able to meet the needs and aspirations of Brent's residents.

The partnership consists of:

- Brent Council
- NHS Brent
- Metropolitan Police
- London Fire Brigade
- Central and North West London Mental Health NHS Trust
- North West London Hospitals NHS Trust
- BrAVA
- College of North West London
- The Employer Partnership
- Brent HAG
- Learning and Skills Council
- Brent schools
- Job Centre Plus
- London Development Agency
- Brent Community/Lay members

Vision/Mission - Statement of Common Purpose

Statement that outlines an agreed common purpose and values for a partnership approach to consultation and engagement.

We share a common public; community empowerment, citizen satisfaction and service accountability are shared themes across all public services. Citizens and communities have knowledge about the wider concerns of an area, the different causes of and solutions to local problems and ideas about what would be a better use of available resources. With this in mind, we will put our community and stakeholder priorities at the centre of service planning and provision.

We will do this in a coordinated way, adhering to shared principles and standards and in such a way as to avoid duplication and enhance the citizen experience with local public services.

Policy context

Community engagement has become increasingly important for local authorities and our partner organisations. It is at the heart of central government policy to improve and modernise local services. Some of the government's key policy initiatives include:

- *The new performance framework including the National Indicator set and the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA);*
- *New legal duties for council's and other public organisations – the duty to inform, consult and involve, the duty to respond to petitions, and obligations under the Sustainable Communities Act;*
- *New empowerment tools – including participatory budgeting, the councillor call for action and community ownership;*
- *Sections 242/244 NHS Act 2006;*
- *World Class Commissioning;*
- *NHS Constitution;*
- *Race Relations Amendment Act 2000;*
- *Disability Discrimination Act.*

The rise of community engagement and empowerment is also driven by the potential opportunities that that agenda offers to local public services in terms of increased well being and place shaping. Community engagement and empowerment provides opportunities for the involvement of local people in the services they use and has practical benefits for public services:

- *Research shows that effective communications is a key driver of resident satisfaction;*

- *Brent in common with other public service organisations increasingly adopts an 'evidence based' approach to its service planning;*
- *We know that members of the public are increasingly interested in being more involved in the decisions made at local level (Brent Council's 2009 Residents' Attitude 39% of people agree).*

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is a term covering a spectrum of activity carried out with people who make up our communities. It's about making sure that people can participate and engage in lots of different ways to make Brent a better place.

In recent years various engagement models have been developed and refined which attempt to describe a range of opportunities for stakeholders, from passive recipient of information to active participant in the delivery of public services. Conventionally these can be summed up as informing, consulting and involving.

1. **Informing** - Information is the basic element of customer focus and community engagement. Information is needed to access services but also to enable people to understand the nature and quality of services. Information is the day business of public authorities and good public service organisations will strive to communicate effectively and continuously with their stakeholders.
2. **Consulting** - the process by which public services seek advice, information and opinions about strategies, policies and services, to inform decision making and design good services which reflect the aspirations of stakeholders. The usual forms for gathering this type of consultation information are surveys, focus groups and public meetings.

3. **Engaging** – over and above being informed and/or consulted and providing real opportunities for stakeholders to get involved in the design, shape and delivery of services.

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We aim to improve the lives of local people through effective engagement and communication with our stakeholders including the public, service users, patients, staff, other partners, providers, voluntary and community groups, opinion formers and seldom heard and under-represented groups to better understand each other's needs and priorities.

The new partnership Consultation and Engagement Toolkit, (replacing the Brent Council Consultation Toolkit), is a shared resource which provides comprehensive advice and guidance on a wide range of communication, consultation and engagement techniques. The toolkit is principal resource for planning consultation and engagement projects.

Strategic Objectives

1. We will share results

Results from consultation and engagement will be shared across the partnership to increase involvement, avoid duplication and consultation fatigue amongst residents and to make best use of available resources. Results of consultation undertaken within the partnership will be fed into our evidence bases to enrich the information available for service planning and strategy development. Consultation and engagement activity will be publicised in the local media to increase good news coverage of engagement activities across the partnership.

2. We will empower local people

Partners for Brent will develop and put in place regular and effective processes which enable all Brent residents to influence and control the services and quality of life in the area in which they live and work and to ensure the needs of local people are met.

3. We will improve satisfaction with our services

Resident satisfaction with public services is a key indicator of our performance and how we are perceived by local people. In Brent we will strive to show continuous improvement during the life of the consultation, engagement and empowerment strategy.

4. We will include under-represented groups

Brent is a multi-cultural, young and vibrant community. More than 55% of our residents are from Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and the borough has the highest proportion of people born outside the EU. The views and concerns of 'under-represented' or 'seldom heard' groups are known and routinely used to inform service planning and delivery. No community or group will be disadvantaged by the way that Partners for Brent engages with residents.

5. We will use the best tools and techniques

We will develop regular, effective and seamless community engagement mechanisms across the partnership. We will encourage the use of different tools and techniques when planning consultation to ensure consultations undertaken are effective, engaging, and make the most of new resources and technology. Advice and guidance on how to use a wide full range of consultation tools are set out in the partnership Consultation and Engagement Toolkit.

6. We will communicate clearly and simply

We will ensure that communication and information materials are written clearly and simply and can be accessed at home, at work, at school and on the move.

7. We will work in partnership

We will work together to make best use of consultation, engagement and empowerment opportunities. We will ensure that consultation and engagement protocols, procedures and quality standards are routinely applied across the partnership ensuring efficiency, value for money and consistency of approach.

8. We will engage elected members

Elected members, (local councillors and members of parliament), will use their role as community leaders to engage local people, using established consultation and engagement methods such as the area forums and neighbourhood working. A constructive relationship between elected members' and their constituents provides useful information for the partners and helps enhance democratic engagement and participation in the borough.

Measures of success / evaluation

The effectiveness of our communication and engagement strategy will be monitored and our principal measures of success will be:

- *The Place Survey – specifically the measurement of National Indicator (NI) 4 – opportunities to influence local decision making;*
- *Brent Residents' Attitude Survey – a face to face survey measuring, liveability, service satisfaction, health, policing, community safety on service satisfaction;*
- *Patient survey (NHS Brent);*
- *Patient perception survey (NHS Brent);*

- *Staff surveys;*
- *Qualitative feedback annual report (NHS Brent);*
- *Ad-hoc research using the Brent Citizens' Panel;*
- *Media monitoring.*

Governance and partnership working

Communication and engagement is governed by Brent council's Consultation Board and in NHS Brent by the PPE Steering Group. Both the Consultation Board and the PPE steering group report directly to their respective executive management teams, for the council this is the Corporate Management Team and for NHS Brent, their Executive Management Team. Brent Council and NHS Brent are represented in the membership of each of these groups. We will establish a practitioner level consultation and engagement officer group open to all partners which will sit below this group.

Appendix 1

Consultation standards

Principles and quality standards will bring about improved coordination and consistency between consultation and engagement activity undertaken in Brent. Revised standards, (below) are the minimum quality standards with which all consultation and engagement activity should comply. The revised standards have been arranged around the key headings of:

- **Clarity**
- **Inclusiveness**
- **Valuing people**
- **Follow up**

The standards are

1. Clarity

We will explain why we're consulting and how we're going to take people's views into account.

- *Have a plan and communicate this – be clear about your purpose, what change is possible and where people can make a difference;*
- *Don't promise what you can't deliver; explain where decisions have already been made and what the parameters are;*
- *Be clear about what you are asking people; who will be affected by proposals and timescales involved;*
- *Information must be clear and concise – use plain language and no jargon;*
- *Check what else is happening in the borough / organisation and seek to coordinate activities.*

2. Inclusiveness

We will involve the widest spectrum of the community in our consultations, including under-represented, marginalised and 'seldom heard' groups.

- *Go where people are – don't expect them to come to you. Consider approaching existing groups and networks;*
- *Don't just speak to people who currently use services – past and future users have valuable input too;*
- *Identify potential barriers for people to get involved and remove them wherever possible;*
- *Be responsive to people's needs - consider providing expenses and be flexible in your approach;*
- *Offer a variety of appropriate methods for the people you want to involve and what you want to find out;*
- *Make sure you give enough time for people to respond.*

3. Valuing people

We will organise consultation in ways which are convenient and accessible to the people whose views we are seeking.

- *Involve people from the outset and throughout the whole process;*
- *Value people's skills and knowledge – listen to what is said;*
- *Value and reward people's time and input;*
- *Make people feel comfortable about asking questions – they are not necessarily experts;*
- *Allow people to speak freely – respect their confidentiality and privacy;*
- *Make it enjoyable!*

4. Follow up

We will act on the findings to improve services, programmes and quality of life for local residents. We will report back to the public what they've told us during the consultation and what we've done as a result of it.

- *Give quick, responsive feedback on what people have said;*
- *Consider what people have said and decide what action to take;*
- *Let people know what you are going to do and when;*
- *If you can't do something let people know and explain why;*
- *Involve people in bringing in the changes;*
- *Evaluate how effective your consultation / engagement was;*

- *And remember to report all activity through appropriate channels and to share results with partners and other key stakeholders.*

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Appendix 2

Consultation Framework – listed below are some of Brent’s standing fora/user groups that partnership members might want to engage in the process of community consultation.

Consultation Opportunity	Frequency	How to access
Five area consultative forums	Quarterly meetings	Brent Council
Service user consultative forums covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pensioners ○ Disabled users ○ Voluntary sector ○ Private sector housing ○ Black & minority ethnic 	Quarterly meetings	Brent Council
Multi faith forum	Ad-hoc	Brent Council
Brent Citizens’ Panel	Ad-hoc	Brent Council
Brent LINK	Ad-hoc	Hestia
Safer Neighbourhoods’ Panels	Ad-hoc	Police SN Teams
Neighbourhood working	Ad-hoc	Brent Council
Brent Youth Parliament	Ad-hoc	Brent Council Children & Families
4 Area Housing Boards	Quarterly meetings	Brent Housing Partnership
Open Forum	Quarterly meetings	BrAVA
Community Safety Board	Ad-hoc	Brent Council Community Safety Team
Brent Health and Social Care Forum	Bi-monthly	NHS Brent