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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our vision is to make Brent a great place to live and work, where people feel that they have real opportunities to change their lives for the better, where they feel that they and their children are safe and cared for and achieve well, and where they receive excellent services when they need them. A place where business and enterprise can prosper and where local people can find employment; a place with plentiful access to arts, leisure and cultural activities; a place where people from different backgrounds feel at ease with one another; a place where the principles of fairness, equality, good citizenship and respect for people and place are valued.
- 1.2 Brent's leadership, staff and partnership agencies all share an understanding that equality and diversity are central to the achievement of this vision for the borough. We take pride in Brent's reputation as a beacon for cultural diversity and community cohesion, and continue to uphold the values of fairness, respect for people, diversity and excellence in all our services. That is why Brent Council committed to working towards the highest level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) at a time when we are responding to serious financial challenges that have required fundamental changes to the way that local services are commissioned and delivered. In meeting these challenges, we believe that the focus must be on equality and fairness to protect the most vulnerable groups in our community.
- 1.3 While undergoing intensive transformation to deliver significant levels of financial savings, we have used the EFLG to structure a journey of improvement on equalities. Working towards the EFLG has helped us to build on a foundation of good practice to become more:
- confident in our understanding of local communities
 - collaborative in our approach to building and sharing our knowledge about local communities across council services, with elected members and with our partners
 - creative in how we engage with partners and community groups to meet the challenges facing local communities
 - committed to an improvement agenda, motivating both staff and communities.

Our context

- 1.4 Brent's population has increased by 18 per cent over the past ten years to 312,000, placing increased demand on council services. We are now the fifth largest of the London boroughs and we are the fourteenth most densely populated area in the country. The number of under five year olds has increased by 37 per cent and those aged 5 - 19 years by eight per cent; the population aged 85 and over increased by 24 per cent in the last five years and is projected to increase by a further 31 per cent over the next five years. Overall, Brent has a younger than average population, often living in extended families.
- 1.5 Brent is also one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in the UK. People from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (BAME) now make up 64 per cent of the total population. We continue to welcome new communities today, such as the growing Eastern European, Filipino and Somali populations and 150 languages are spoken in the borough. We are proud of our historic ability to welcome people from different cultures, support their integration and create a context in which people from

different backgrounds feel they get on well together. The cultural diversity of the borough and the cohesion between our different communities are major factors in Brent's characteristic vibrancy and dynamism.

- 1.6 The diversity of the council's workforce closely reflects the wider community of Brent, although currently BAME staff are underrepresented at senior management levels. We actively promote the value of such a richly diverse workforce with our partners and providers because it strengthens understanding of the perspectives of the different communities receiving local services. It helps us to develop and deliver effective community engagement, to build stronger communities, and to provide the best quality services, tailored to user needs.
- 1.7 There is much to be valued in Brent as a place to live, work and do business. It is home to the iconic Wembley Stadium, the Wembley Arena and the spectacular Swaminarayan Hindu Temple, and our borough is the destination for thousands of British and international visitors every year. We are served by some of the best road and rail transport links in London. Our population is young, dynamic, entrepreneurial and growing. We have award winning parks and fine open spaces, good schools, and a vibrant cultural offer. Brent 's vibrancy, close proximity to the London job market and strongly established community support networks continue to attract a diverse range of people to work and make their home here.

For more information about the diversity of Brent's population, please see Appendix 1.

Our challenges

- 1.8 Brent's commitment to equality has never been more relevant than now. We are working in the context of a challenging financial climate which is impacting heavily on our residents and on the services that are provided and commissioned by councils. By 2018, the council's budget will have been cut in half. Poverty, unemployment and adult skills levels are key challenges for the borough, underpinning the pressing need to promote growth in job opportunities, to encourage and support residents to access them and to tackle health inequalities.
- 1.9 The median household income in Brent is the third lowest in London. One in every three children in the borough is living in poverty and this increases to 50 per cent in our most deprived wards. Brent has the fifth highest private rent levels in London, making even two bedroom properties unaffordable for many on average earnings. There is a greater reliance in Brent than many other places on benefits and social housing. For families affected by the benefit cap, larger homes are not affordable and even two bedroom accommodation is becoming increasingly difficult to find.
- 1.10 Living in poverty generally contributes to poorer health, well-being and social isolation. People on low incomes in Brent are more likely to have a life-limiting health condition, take less exercise and have a shorter life. Obesity is an increasing concern, and more people are experiencing mental health problems.
- 1.11 Protecting the most vulnerable in our communities and helping them to improve their quality of life means reducing poverty levels, the inequality in wages levels, promoting the London Living Wage, and supporting independence and choice. We need to develop practical responses to issues such as fuel debt, expensive childcare,

loan sharks and poor health outcomes related to poverty. We plan to do this by working collaboratively with our residents, our public service partners in the NHS, the police and fire service, housing associations, local businesses and our voluntary and community sector partners towards our common goals.

Our structure

- 1.12 Brent is a Labour-run council. Our political leadership is highly diverse and representative of the local community: 16 per cent of Members are disabled; 60 per cent are BAME; and 40 per cent are female. Cllr Muhammed Butt, the Leader, has responsibility for equality and diversity on the council's Cabinet. We are delighted that Cllr Butt has recently been elected as London Councils' Lead Member for Equalities to lead on developing and directing London Councils' policy in this area. Cllr Michael Pavey, the Deputy Leader, has an overarching responsibility for equality and diversity in the borough. All elected Members take seriously their responsibilities for championing equality, promoting cohesion and fostering good relations within their constituencies.
- 1.13 The corporate Diversity Reference Group provides senior leadership and strategic direction for developing and implementing excellent equality and diversity policy, practice and service delivery. The Diversity Reference Group was established in 2013 and is chaired by Christine Gilbert, Chief Executive. It reports annually to Brent's Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet on progress against the equality strategy and action plan and on the diversity profile of our residents, service users and workforce. The Diversity Reference Group has steered Brent's journey towards the EFLG.
- 1.14 There are four council departments:
- Adults Social Care, which comprises Commissioning, Direct Services, Reablement & Safeguarding and Support Planning & Review
 - the Chief Operating Officer's Department, which comprises Community Services, Corporate & Business Support and Strategic Commissioning
 - Children & Young People, which comprises Early Help, Education and Social Care
 - Regeneration & Growth, which comprises Housing & Employment, Planning & Regeneration and Property & Projects.
- 1.15 A senior manager from each council department sits on the Diversity Reference Group and leads their Departmental Equality Group. The Departmental Equality Groups form a link between the Diversity Reference Group and council departments and services, acting as equality champions to promote good practice on equality and human rights across all functions of the council.
- 1.16 The Diversity Reference Group and Departmental Equality Groups are supported by an Equality Team, comprising a Head of Equality and two Equality Officers. The Equality Team was restructured in late 2013 to have a greater partnership role and outward focus, and to increase the seniority of the Head of Equality to reflect the importance of this role in the council. The Equality Team works proactively with all areas of the council and local partners to drive improvements in equalities.

Brent Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019

- 1.17 Brent's [Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019](#) and [Equality Policy](#) were launched in April 2015 along with the Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015-16 which will be updated annually. The new Equality Strategy replaces and builds upon the foundations of good practice laid by our previous Single Equality Schemes and [equality objectives](#). It offers a refreshed vision of how the council can become a model of outstanding practice on equality and diversity that is appropriate to our current context, such as by exploring new forms of partnership and community engagement.
- 1.18 Together the Equality Strategy and Policy set out how we will promote equality and diversity in all that we do - as a leading organisation in the borough, as a provider and commissioner of services, and as an employer - to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Brent. Everyone who works for the council is responsible for helping to deliver the Equality Strategy and for conducting themselves in line with the principles in the Equality Policy.
- 1.19 Brent's previous equality objectives had focused on the implementation of processes such as equality monitoring and analysis. Ways in which we progressed against these objectives included:
- improving our evidence base by launching 'Brent Data' – a website to bring together a wide range of datasets and statistics to help us to shape services and address inequality
 - using performance data relating to equality efficiently to improve services such as Looked After Children and rough sleepers' services
 - strengthening the role of equalities considerations in our procurement and commissioning processes.
- 1.20 The implementation of the previous equality objectives meant that we had a robust base upon which to build our new objectives and strategy for 2015-19. We were keen to move towards a greater emphasis on outcomes to drive improvements for residents, service users and staff. We set five equality and human rights objectives in the Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019 in order to achieve key equalities outcomes for those who live and work in Brent:
1. To know and understand all our communities
 2. To involve our communities effectively
 3. To demonstrate leadership in equalities and human rights, both within the council and amongst partners, and organisational commitment to excellence
 4. To ensure that local public services are responsive to different needs and treat users with dignity and respect
 5. To develop and sustain a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people.
- 1.21 The priorities and objectives set out in the Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019 were agreed following extensive consultation with Members, staff, residents and stakeholders across the borough. We also reviewed good practice within and beyond the sector and were heavily influenced by the EFLG.

For more information, please see the Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019, the Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 - 2016 and the Equality Policy.

2. Knowing our communities

- 2.1 To work effectively in such a diverse setting as Brent with a rapidly changing population, we need a robust understanding of the changing identities and needs of all our local communities. Since the introduction of the Equality Act 2010, Brent has developed a strong evidence base of information about residents, service users and staff. This information is all published on [Brent Data](#), a section of our website developed in 2012 to present our evidence base and share it with local partners.
- 2.2 This information has enabled us to identify and address inequalities and the needs of different equality groups. For example, we used evidence about changes to the ethnicity of Looked After Children (while Black Caribbean children remained the largest group, there was an increase in the representation of White British, Somali and Eastern European children) to target services at children at risk of coming into the system who could be better cared for at home. This led to a reduction of Looked After Children to 47 per 10,000 child population by September 2012, comparing favourably with the rate of 63 per 10,000 for our statistical neighbours.
- 2.3 More recently, we undertook the projects set out below to ensure that a robust understanding of the realities of our residents' lives informs our planning and decision making so that we can ensure best quality services and deliver better outcomes for all of our residents.

Service user diversity profiles

- 2.4 We have produced a series of diversity profiles: for the borough, for each of our 21 wards and for different service areas. Each profile presents information from a range of data sources in an accessible and engaging format. In addition to providing a detailed overview of the diversity and intersectionality of service users, the profiles highlight population changes over time and variations in key service outcomes for different equality groups. Collectively, the profiles offer a revealing picture of what makes Brent distinctive and the nuances of the borough's diversity. The diversity profiles were shortlisted for the Local Area Research and Intelligence Awards 2015.
- 2.5 Officers are encouraged to use the diversity profiles to inform corporate and business planning, to identify and address gaps in service use and outcomes, and to support a more rigorous and thoughtful approach to equality analysis. In September 2014, we ran a well-attended series of workshops for staff on the issues raised by the diversity profiles and how they should inform service development and delivery. Following positive feedback from attendees, this presentation has been incorporated into our corporate induction which is mandatory for all new starters. All public service providers in the borough can access the profiles through Brent Data to develop a better understanding of the changing identities and needs of Brent's residents.

For more information about the diversity profiles, please see the [Brent Diversity Profile](#), the [Wembley Central Diversity Profile](#) and the [Adult Social Care Service User Profile](#).

Residents' Attitudes Survey 2014

- 2.6 The council carried out a comprehensive Residents' Attitudes Survey in 2014, which involved face to face interviews with 2,100 residents (100 from each ward) chosen to

be representative of the diversity of the overall population. Survey participants were asked to provide a range of demographic information about themselves and their families, including their equality characteristics and socio-economic status, how long they have lived in Brent, whether they are renters or homeowners and far more. This information has been analysed to understand which residents are affected by specific issues and what different groups of residents think about a range of issues.

- 2.7 The survey findings demonstrated increased satisfaction from residents since the last survey on this scale was carried out in 2009 and positive comparisons with Local Government Association benchmarks:
- 84 per cent are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
 - 67 per cent are satisfied with the way the council runs things
 - the proportion of people who agree that Brent is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well with one another has increased from 74 per cent in 2009 to 84 per cent
 - the proportion of people who agree that the council listens to local people has increased from 37 per cent in 2009 to 42 per cent.
- 2.8 The survey results provided an insight into how current service provision is meeting the needs and expectations of our residents. We learned that the key priorities for most residents are community safety, clean streets, transport and parks and that residents would like to see more money being spent on these areas and health services. The survey results formed a key part of the consultation process for the development of the Brent Borough Plan 2015 - 2019 and informed the priorities that have been set for the borough in the plan.

For more information about resident involvement in the development of the Brent Borough Plan, please see Case Study 10 – Brent Borough Plan Development

Monitoring performance

- 2.9 Brent's commitment to monitoring and evaluating equalities data goes well beyond our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Organisation-wide and departmental equalities objectives and key performance indicators have been set in line with the priorities in the Brent Borough Plan and Equality Strategy. Progress against these key performance indicators is reviewed on a regular basis by Departmental Equality Groups, Departmental Management Teams, the Diversity Reference Group and the Corporate Management Team.
- 2.10 Officers can benchmark their performance and compare progress across objectives both internally and with similar organisations. Staff use a bespoke version of inPhase (a performance and business management database) to monitor their performance across a range of equality key performance indicators and data is reviewed regularly on a customisable data dashboard. For information on service users, we use the Client Index system which provides a hub of information about Brent service users, populated with regular extracts from Brent databases in areas such as council tax, housing benefit, the electoral register and social care. This enables staff to fully understand residents through accurate and accessible single customer records.

3. Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

- 3.1 Brent's commitment to diversity and equality lies at the heart of our vision, objectives, priorities and plans. Our political leaders and senior officers have always acted as champions for equality and diversity and their commitment has been the key driver behind our journey towards the Excellent level of the EFLG. To support Members to carry out their role as ambassadors for equality, we have run training sessions for them on the diversity of the borough, the Equality Act 2010, unconscious bias and challenging prejudice.
- 3.2 One priority of our Single Equality Scheme 2012 was to work in partnership with voluntary and community led organisations to ensure that services are delivered to the wider community. This helped us to develop relationships with partners who are more representative of all our local communities. As a result, we now work with a wide range of partners to foster good relations and build resilient, cohesive communities that take pride in their neighbourhoods.
- 3.3 For example, rough sleeping in Brent increased by 500 per cent from 2009 to 2012. A group of Eastern European homeless men, many with mental health needs, started sleeping rough inside two derelict garages, causing a nuisance to local residents. We worked with a number of local partners - including residents, homelessness charities, the police, and ward councillors - to resolve the issue sensitively to the benefit of all by removing the rough sleepers from the garages and signposting them to support services to address their needs. We have continued to work with these partners to develop and deliver interventions to support rough sleepers and prevent them from causing a nuisance.

Leadership at Brent

- 3.4 Our political leadership has become renowned nationally and locally for championing borough and London-wide equality issues. For example, Brent announced plans to become the first local authority in the country to offer business rates discounts as an incentive for paying the London Living Wage in November 2014. All staff directly employed by the council have been made the living wage since November 2013. We were concerned that approximately 30 per cent of Brent residents currently earn less than the living wage, which is the amount a person needs to cover the basic costs of living. Up to 200 businesses in Brent could benefit from this initiative, meaning that some of the lowest paid workers in the borough will see their pay increase by around £2.50 per hour. Cllr Roxanne Mashari, Lead Member for Employment and Skills, said: 'We are committed to championing the living wage and tackling the root causes of poverty in our borough... Many hard-working people on low wages struggle to make ends meet and it is up to councils like ours to do everything we can to ensure that a fair day's work leads to a fair day's pay.'
- 3.5 Our senior leaders have also chosen to use their influence to raise the profile of equalities within Brent. For example, Cllr Butt spoke passionately and authentically about his personal commitment to equality to residents, service users, staff and local service providers at our events to mark LGBT History Month, International Women's Day, Black History Month and International Day for Disabled People. Cllr Pavey undertook an in depth review of the council's HR and Equalities policies and practices in December 2014, producing 31 recommendations to strengthen inclusion

and increase the diversity of staff at senior levels. The Chief Executive regularly highlights equality issues and initiatives in her blog that is sent directly to all staff.

For more information about Cllr Pavey's review of HR and Equality policies, please see 6.8.

Brent Borough Plan 2015 - 2019

- 3.6 The [Brent Borough Plan 2015 - 2019](#) sets out how we will go about building a better Brent together with everyone who has a stake in the future of the borough. Led by the council working with Partners for Brent (the Local Strategic Partnership), it is an ambitious plan for the future of the borough. The plan is based on the results of the Residents' Attitudes Survey and extensive consultation with local communities on the things that mattered most to them and their suggestions for making Brent an even better place to live and work. Service and Corporate Plans are linked to the Borough Plan through objectives and a shared vision for Brent.
- 3.7 Through the council, stakeholders, residents and partners working together, the Borough Plan aims to make Brent a great place to live and work and a:
- safer, more attractive and more environmentally-friendly borough
 - borough with good quality housing and engaging arts and leisure facilities
 - more inclusive borough, for those who live and work here including our children, young people and vulnerable residents
 - borough with greater opportunities for people to achieve work and prosper
 - healthy borough where residents are supported and cared for when they need it most.

For more information about resident involvement in the development of the Brent Borough Plan, please see Case Study 10 – Brent Borough Plan Development.

Recent examples of partnership working to promote equalities and good relations

- 3.8 Brent works closely with a wide range of partners to tackle local inequalities and strengthen community engagement mechanisms. Partners for Brent is the Local Strategic Partnership that brings together a range of public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations responsible for delivering services at a local level. Its aims are to inform, consult and engage with Brent residents and act as an advisory body to the council on its decision making.
- 3.9 In March 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group published a report on preventing Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so-called 'honour' based violence in the borough. Research conducted by a national charity in 2010 had demonstrated that Brent had the second highest number of women who had undergone Female Genital Mutilation that gave birth to children in England and Wales. The Task Group gathered data on VAWG incidents in the borough from the police and voluntary and community organisations and made a number of recommendations to improve practices and joint working. A VAWG Strategy Group was set up to bring together a wide range of partner agencies to carry out these recommendations, including mapping the number of women and girls at risk, raising awareness within local communities, training key staff and working jointly with schools and health agencies to share information. This

has already led to positive outcomes, such as taking action to protect young girls who were identified as being at risk of forced marriage. We also used our Ward Working budget in Stonebridge to fund an innovative programme organised by the Help Somalia Foundation, the Asian Women's Resource Centre and FORWARD to educate and empower women, young people and soon-to-be parents about Female Genital Mutilation.

- 3.9 In August 2014 we supported the NHS Brent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Governing Body to carry out an independent review of patient engagement and equalities. The review made a recommendation for the CCG to collaborate more closely with the council, in particular our Health and Wellbeing Board, and other local agencies to strengthen the momentum towards more integrated services and greater emphasis on prevention. We have begun to explore mechanisms through which to improve partnership and engagement in respect of the Better Care Fund and the Integrated Care Model and are also supporting the CCG to develop a Health Partners Forum to engage local people in the shaping of local health services, primary care and hospital service development.
- 3.10 Brent's Prevent Advisory Forum brings together statutory and community partners to provide a network of credible voices who understand the Prevent Strategy alongside the needs of the local community. The group is chaired by Cllr James Denselow, the Lead Member for Stronger Communities, and is attended by representatives from the CVS, police, Brent Multi Faith Forum and religious communities, youth organisations and local community groups. The Prevent Advisory Forum aims to identify the most suitable avenues to challenge extremism and build community resilience locally. When the English Defence League organised demonstrations in Brent in 2014, the Prevent Advisory Forum members were able to agree and successfully communicate a local response to prevent any violent responses and reduce community tensions.

Brent Social Mobility Commission

- 3.11 In 2013 the council set up a Commission on Social Mobility to address concerns that the benefits of economic growth within Brent had not been experienced equally by all parts of the community. We wanted to make sure that those people most badly affected by the recession would be able to benefit fully from economic recovery. A panel of independent commissioners was brought together to develop ideas and practical actions that could enhance opportunities for local people to improve their living standards. The panel gathered evidence through discussions with community groups, voluntary sector partners and local businesses.
- 3.12 The Commission's report was published in 2014. We are now in the process of implementing its recommendations: to improve the way we store and analyse data on clients (already addressed through improving our Client Index); to increase the supply and improve the quality of housing (being addressed through our Housing Strategy); to introduce greater regulation of the private rented sector (already fully implemented); and to attract new investment to support growth within the borough.

Tackling inequalities through procurement

- 3.13 Brent's procurement and commissioning processes are underpinned by sound equalities practices, which are reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for

purpose. This ensures that all of the council's contractors and suppliers comply with our equality and diversity standards. The [Supply Brent portal](#) was set up to link local businesses to supply chain opportunities and to assist local residents in securing employment. This has assisted local businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to benefit from council contracts. For example, 25 local companies and 133 local operatives worked on the building of Brent Civic Centre.

- 3.14 More recently, we have used procurement to tackle local health inequalities. There are significant health inequalities in Brent, linked to our cultural diversity and low average incomes. For example, the gap in life expectancy between men in the most affluent and the most deprived parts of the borough is 8.8 years. Brent recognises that improving the wellbeing and prosperity of those individuals and communities who experience health inequalities and disadvantages requires a joined-up approach between the council and its key health partners.
- 3.15 In 2014/15 the Public Health Team commissioned new drug and alcohol services, sexual health services, school nursing services and post health check support and community services. The robust procurement processes and comprehensive guidance on procurement and equalities encouraged the Public Health Team to take into account a range of equality considerations and to involve service users at all stages of the procurement process. For example, Recovery Champions made key decisions about service design and helped to evaluate tenders for drugs and alcohol services. As a result, the team commissioned effective targeted services such as HIV prevention for young people and BAME groups, and women-only drug and alcohol services to support women at risk of being involved in sexual exploitation.

For more information about our work to tackle local health inequalities, please see the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#).

Tackling inequalities in education

- 3.16 In 2014 the Brent Scrutiny Committee reviewed the council's approach to narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils (eligible for the pupil premium) and non-disadvantaged pupils in the borough. The committee scrutinised the work of the council over the previous years, consulted with pupils and young people in Brent and produced a report with recommendations. It noted that the most recent Brent data showed that Brent's disadvantaged pupil premium performance for Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and maths is above the national averages, but is still below that of their peers who are not disadvantaged.
- 3.17 In January 2015 the Minister of State for Schools, David Laws MP, wrote to six Brent primary schools to congratulate them on the improvement in the Key Stage 2 results of their disadvantaged pupils since 2011 and wrote to a further three primary schools, to congratulate them on the improvement since 2012. In Brent, the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is narrowing across many areas of school learning. The gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils attaining five GCSE grades A* - C narrowed by one percentage point; the gap at Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics narrowed by three percentage points to seven percentage points; and the gap between Brent disadvantaged pupils and the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils narrowed by one percentage point to 14 percentage points.

4. Involving our communities

- 4.1 Brent has developed a number of mechanisms to involve our communities in helping to shape local priorities and reducing inequalities in service delivery. Our Single Equality Scheme 2012 led to a review of our overall approach to consultation to improve engagement with minority groups who were less likely to be heard. This enabled us to engage with residents and stakeholders on key local issues, such as welfare reform which was expected to lead to Brent residents suffering the greatest financial loss in London. Community engagement helped us to gain a deeper insight into the likely impact of welfare reform on minority groups and to keep local communities informed of upcoming changes. We established a dedicated team that worked closely with Job Centre Plus and other partners to direct help to the households worst affected by benefit changes and to limit the impact of welfare reform on our most vulnerable residents. As a result, although lone parents and Black ethnic groups were disproportionately impacted by the overall benefits cap, the team achieved correspondingly higher resolutions for their cases through employment or relocation.
- 4.2 Brent's new Borough Plan 2015 - 2019 outlines our approach to using new and creative forms of community engagement so that all of our residents - including under-represented groups - feel that they can participate in public life and that the council listens to them. Our aspirational and ambitious vision for the borough can only be achieved if everyone with a stake in the borough works together with a clear focus on our common goals. To maintain high standards of service in the face of rising demand and falling funding, we have recognised that we need to build a new relationship with our local communities. The new Borough Plan places more emphasis on building cohesive, resilient communities and increasing civic participation and engagement, such as through encouraging volunteering. In the Residents' Attitude Survey 2014, 41 per cent of residents said they would be prepared to help run a local service and 26 per cent said that the motivation to do this would be to 'be a part of my community'.
- 4.3 Partners for Brent held a strategic meeting in February 2015 to discuss how the partnership would need to progress to support the implementation of the Borough Plan in light of this refreshed approach. Partners for Brent supports this shift from viewing residents as passive users of council services to partners who can shape and influence the services they receive.

Engagement structures

- 4.4 Brent has a multitude of approaches to engaging and listening to our communities, from service user forums and focus groups to events and weeks of action in our local communities. Our consultation and engagement forums include:
- **Brent Connects Forums:** resident forums facilitated by Members which are a central part of consultation and engagement. Brent Connects Forums cover both geographic areas and service user groups. Issues raised at these forums range from local parking to partnerships with neighbouring councils.
 - **Service user groups:** forums for users of particular services, such as the BHeard Service User Group for Adults Social Care service users. BHeard

plays a key role in procurement and commissioning exercises and will be involved in the appointment of a new Service User and Carer Engagement and Involvement Officer role in May 2015.

- **Brent Citizen's Panel:** a partnership project between the council, the police and Brent Health Action Zone. The Citizen's Panel provides a platform for 2,000 local residents to contribute their views on local services.
- **Brent Youth Parliament:** a group of 53 young people (aged from 10 - 19 years) elected by their peers to debate issues such as gang culture, education and careers, citizenship and national identity, crime and health.
- **Brent Multi Faith Forum:** a group established to provide an opportunity for all faith communities to have greater influence in Brent. The Multi Faith Forum meets quarterly with council representatives and facilitates events to engage residents across all faiths with council activities. These have recently included events on supporting people with dementia, preventing terrorism and extremism, and encouraging under-represented groups to register to vote.

Please see 6.17 for information about how we consult and engage staff.

- 4.5 Brent also uses online surveys to consult with residents and community groups on proposed changes to services such as the Housing Allocation Scheme and youth support services. There has been a notable increase in participation in these online surveys over the past few years. Our equalities monitoring shows that a diverse and representative range of residents are participating in online consultations.

Community involvement in budget development

- 4.6 Involving our communities has been central to the way that Brent has responded to the financial challenges that we are facing. When setting the [Budget 2015/16](#), the council had to make difficult decisions to achieve £54 million of savings over the next two years, due to cuts in central government funding. To inform the decision making process, the Cabinet decided to conduct a large scale public consultation with residents, the voluntary and community sector, local businesses and other groups on the draft savings proposals and their consequences.
- 4.7 Key messages emerging from the consultation responses were that: council spending should be focused on core front line services for the most vulnerable members of the community, particularly in children's services and adult social care; that local community groups have a strong appetite to co-design neighbourhood services; and the importance of the strong community networks that exist in Brent. As a direct result of consultation responses, it was agreed not to take forward proposals to reduce respite and day care for adults social service users, to close a leisure centre or to close local children's centres.

For further information on the consultation process that shaped the Budget 2015/16, please see Case Study 11 – Budget 2014/15 Development.

Participation in public life

- 4.8 Our political leadership regularly hold their meetings in community locations to promote transparency and encourage local people to get involved and make sure their voices are heard. Recent Cabinet meetings have been held in the Pakistani Community Centre in Willesden Green and [Patidar House](#) (an arts space for people from all cultures run by a Gujarati Hindu Patel community organisation) in Wembley.
- 4.9 In 2015, changes to electoral registration meant that ten per cent of Brent's electorate dropped off the electoral register - mostly young people, traveller communities, people living in residential care homes and BAME residents - and risked becoming disenfranchised from democratic processes. The council worked closely with community groups including Mencap, Brent CVS and Brent Multi Faith Forum to promote the benefits of registration and engagement with both local and national democratic processes to these groups. This resulted in an increase of 19,000 registered voters in Brent.

For more information about the Voter Registration Project, please see Case Study 5 – Electoral Registration Project.

5. Responsive services and customer care

- 5.1 Brent's commitment to equality and human rights is integrated into our business planning and delivery, including service level procurement, resource allocation and performance management. We have been conducting equality analysis (formerly known as equality impact assessments) since 2003 to ensure that the potential impacts of our policies and services on different equality groups are understood and that our services are accessible to all. Equality analysis is conducted on all proposals put to our Cabinet so that equality considerations can inform our decision-making.
- 5.2 Through robust equality analysis, we have consistently ensured that the best possible quality local services are provided, appropriate to the diverse and changing needs of all our residents, to deliver positive outcomes for our service users. For some examples of how we have done this, please see:
- the BHeard User Group Case Study (14) which shows how Adults Social Care is responding to the needs of disabled service users and residents
 - the Harlesden Town Centre Regeneration Project Case Study (17) which demonstrates how the Chief Operating Officer's Department worked with the local community to improve and shape the accessibility of the Harlesden area
 - the Somali Community Engagement Case Study (6) in which the Children & Young People's Department responded to communities' needs for information on fostering and adoption in Brent
 - the Community Access Programme Case Study (21) which demonstrates how the Regeneration & Growth Department is involving residents in the development of changing service delivery.

Refreshing the equality analysis process

- 5.3 Equality analysis has been core to policy development and decision making at Brent for over ten years. We view equality analysis as an essential tool to put our values into practice, by helping officers and Members to give thoughtful consideration to how our work could affect people in different ways and whether our policies and practices are fair. Over the past year, the Diversity Reference Group reviewed our equality analysis processes and developed a new approach that would support the council to negotiate the challenges facing the borough in the years ahead successfully.
- 5.4 In January 2015, we rolled out this new approach and introduced an online equality analysis system, which makes use of technology to ensure that equality analyses are conducted in a timely manner. As part of this change, we ensured that rigorous equality analysis was embedded into all business processes, including business planning, procurement, financial decision-making and restructuring exercises. The launch of the new process was supported by a communications and training programme to build understanding of the importance of equality analysis.
- 5.5 Our new approach has: made the equality analysis process more robust, user-friendly and effective; equipped officers with the confidence and insight to perform equality analysis to a high standard; and promoted the message that 'knowing our

communities' has to be at the heart of effective equality analysis. Departmental Equality Groups took on responsibility for auditing equality analyses which has encouraged departments to take greater ownership over the process, to ensure that equality analyses are started at the earliest possible stage, and to share learning from equality analyses. The Equality Team has shared learning about Brent's new approach to equality analysis with the London Equality Network and the London Project and Programme Management Forum.

For more information about refreshing the equality analysis process, please see Case Study 22 – Equality Analysis System Review.

Brent's Customer Promise

- 5.6 In 2014, we updated the [Brent Customer Promise](#), a public pledge which states that our customers have the right to expect good quality, easily accessible council services and information. The Customer Promise places an emphasis on treating people as individuals and responding to their individual needs. All staff have been trained on the values behind our Customer Promise to achieve a standardised approach to customer care across the council.

Community Access Programme

- 5.8 Brent's Customer Promise and increasingly customer-focused approach lies behind our Community Access Programme which was agreed by the Cabinet in October 2014. This transformation programme will improve the way that service users engage with the council and increase the accessibility of our services. The programme aims to support residents to become more self sufficient in managing their interactions with the council and to improve customer care. By improving the efficiency of service delivery, the programme will also contribute major financial savings.
- 5.9 One major plank of the programme is a move towards accessing services online across most areas of the council. For some residents who are used to accessing services on a face to face basis, this will be a different way of interacting with the council. Concerns were raised about the potential impacts on some vulnerable groups of service users, including older people and disabled people. We undertook comprehensive consultation, focus groups, surveys, research and data analysis to inform the equality analysis for the implementation of the programme.
- 5.10 The equality analysis identified a number of potential negative equality impacts and we have put mitigations in place to reduce their impact, including a commitment that our most vulnerable service users will always be able to access face to face services. The effectiveness of these mitigations is reviewed regularly by the programme board. We were also heartened to identify positive impacts for many groups of service users and to learn that two thirds of Brent residents possess the skills and technology to access digital services and would be inclined to use them more if that would help protect other council activities from cuts.

For more information about the Community Access Programme, please see Case Study 21 – Community Access Programme and the Equality Analysis of the Community Access Programme in the evidence portfolio.

Flexible childcare scheme

- 5.11 Brent is the only council in the country that is offering a flexible child-minding service, which offers families access to affordable childcare at short notice, overnight and at weekends. The flexible child-minding pool, which was launched in March 2014, provides vital support to parents working irregular hours or shift work, or who are juggling other commitments such as job interviews.
- 5.12 The service was introduced after a survey of local parents and carers revealed that difficulties finding flexible, affordable child care were the main barrier preventing many jobseekers - especially women - from attending job interviews, working shift patterns and taking up employment. Employment rates in Brent are below the average for London: women have lower employment rates than men and black people have the lowest employment rates of all ethnic groups. We developed and launched the flexible childcare scheme to support more residents into work.
- 5.13 The scheme is promoted through Brent's Children and Families Information Service, JobCentre Plus, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and a range of community organisations. The scheme won the Innovation Award at the Local Government Chronicle national awards who were impressed with the level of enthusiasm that had been dedicated to a simple yet innovative solution to tackle local unemployment. Over 40 children currently benefit from the scheme. Cllr Muhammed Butt said: ' We are a listening council and we are responding to the needs of our residents who have told us that the lack of flexible childcare at short-notice is a barrier to finding gainful employment. This family-friendly scheme is a stepping stone to employment which supports our residents to help themselves and we want other local authorities to learn from us.'

For more information about the Flexible Childcare Scheme, please see Case Study 19 – Flexible Childcare Scheme.

Brent Civic Centre

- 5.14 [Brent Civic Centre](#) opened in 2013, bringing service users and over 2,000 staff together in a fully accessible environment with spacious and well-equipped public areas (including a library, event facilities, prayer rooms and a customer services centre) and innovative office space. The council consulted closely with staff and service users, especially disabled people and faith groups, to develop the designs for Brent Civic Centre.
- 5.15 Since Brent Civic Centre opened, the council has tested how well it is working for staff and service users and made improvements to enhance accessibility further. A Building User Survey carried out in 2014 highlighted that Brent Civic Centre is considered to be safe and accessible with disabled people giving positive feedback on toilets, corridors and catering. Areas for improvement identified included heating and car parking facilities. A further Building User Survey is scheduled to take place in summer 2015.
- 5.16 We also commissioned an external Accessibility Audit in August 2014. The Audit found that routes were accessible, that staff are present to help residents and service users in public areas and praised the visual and audible alarm and lift systems. The

Audit identified weaker areas and provided recommendations to address them. The Facilities Management Team allocated £75,000 for an action plan to implement these recommendations. Improvements already implemented include the installation of a Changing Places toilet, way-finding improvements, the introduction of height-adjustable desks in the customer services centre, and adding bright logo stickers to meeting room doors to assist people with visual impairments.

For more information about the Civic Centre Access Audit, please see Case Study 20 – Civic Centre Accessibility Audit.

6. A skilled and committed workforce

6.1 Brent is proud of our record of recruiting and retaining a diverse, highly skilled and motivated workforce, which enables us to meet the needs of all local people. Our commitment to equality and diversity is integral to all employment policies, practices and procedures. We continually seek new ways to create an even more inclusive workplace where all of our diverse employees feel engaged and able to be themselves and are responsive to the needs of local communities.

Our workforce diversity

6.2 We have produced an Annual Workforce Equalities Report since 2000. This report presents an overview of the diversity of our workforce and job applicants, broken down by all of the equality characteristics. This information helps us to analyse the effects of our employment policies and practices on equality and to identify key priorities so that we can take targeted actions to strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion in our workforce.

6.3 The evidence within this report is used when updating our annual Equality Strategy Action Plan, setting and reviewing equality objectives, and developing workforce equality initiatives. The key findings of the [Annual Workforce Equalities Report 2013/14](#) were that:

- Brent has the highest number of BAME employees (62 per cent) and is ranked fifth for BAME top earners of all London boroughs, and we have achieved a gender-balanced senior management team.
- Nonetheless, we recognise that we could still do better in respect of representation of BAME staff at senior management levels. Disabled staff are also under-represented in senior management in comparison with the overall workforce.
- Brent has excellent retention rates of disabled staff. The number of disabled employees increased over 2013/14 despite a reduction in staffing levels.
- Brent has excellent retention rates of staff who have returned to work from maternity leave, probably as a result of investment in flexible working practices.
- There were unexplained changes to the representation of different equality groups during the recruitment process, suggesting a need for more thorough analysis of recruitment equalities data. More comprehensive recruitment data is being analysed for the Annual Workforce Equalities Report 2014-15.

6.4 The Annual Workforce Equalities Report is published on our website and shared widely with staff and partners. The report is reviewed annually by Members, the Corporate Management Team, trade unions and the Diversity Reference Group. All of these groups, Departmental Management Teams and Departmental Equality Groups also review workforce equalities metrics and key performance indicators on a regular basis.

6.5 Brent carried out an Equal Pay Audit in 2015 which demonstrated that the council's pay policies and procedures are effective in ensuring that men and women receive equal pay for equal work. Overall, there is a gender pay gap of 0.08 per cent for all the staff included in the equal pay audit - an insignificant pay gap that falls well within

the range of acceptability which has been defined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. All in-grade gender pay differences identified during the audit could be accounted for by gender differences in length of service within the pay grade.

For more information about our workforce diversity profile, please see the [Annual Workforce Equalities Report 2013/14](#), the Equal Pay Audit March 2015 and the Annual Workforce Equalities Report 2014/15 which will be published in June 2015.

Equalities data refresh

- 6.6 In March 2013, the council undertook a comprehensive staff equalities data refresh programme and for the first time was able to report on all of the equality characteristics protected by law. The data refresh achieved an excellent response rate of 78 per cent. However, a high proportion of staff had not disclosed all of their equality characteristics, making it challenging to get a clear picture of workforce diversity and to take effective actions to improve performance. The launch of Oracle, a new data management system, presented an opportunity to run another equalities data refresh exercise. Oracle allowed staff to use self-service to update their equalities information confidentially for the first time.
- 6.7 The data refresh was championed by the Chief Executive and Departmental Equality Groups who all promoted the message that equalities data is treated confidentially and used to strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion at Brent to the benefit of all staff. We also raised staff awareness about the range of disabilities and health conditions that are considered to be a disability under the Equality Act 2010. This exercise resulted in large increases to declaration rates across all of the equality characteristics. Additionally the proportion of staff disclosing that they were disabled increased from eight to ten per cent.

Review of HR and Equalities Policies

- 6.8 Between October 2014 and January 2015, Cllr Pavey undertook a wide-ranging review of the council's HR and Equalities policies and procedures and of our progress towards the EFLG. The methodology consisted of scrutinising documents and policies, discussions with managers and staff, and was supported by the Local Government Association and other external experts in order to ensure objectivity and fairness.
- 6.9 The [review](#) found that Brent is generally a happy and inclusive place to work and that HR policies are sound, although people do not necessarily always apply them consistently. It acknowledged that there is a real challenge in ensuring that people from BAME backgrounds are represented within the senior management team. As a result, the published report detailed 31 specific recommendations for improvement, including implementing a mentoring system to nurture the talent of under-represented groups and introducing compulsory unconscious bias training for all managers and recruiters. An [action plan](#) to implement these recommendations was reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee in April 2015 and a new Equalities Committee of Members, chaired by Cllr Pavey, has been set up to monitor progress against this action plan.

For more information about the Review of HR and Equalities Policies, please see Case Study 24 – HR and Equalities Policies Review.

Break Barriers, Open Doors programme

- 6.10 Our popular Break Barriers, Open Doors communications programme has increased staff engagement with equalities and raised awareness about the importance of all of the equality characteristics for the work of the council. The programme has included events to celebrate LGBT History Month, International Women's Day, Black History Month and International Day for Disabled People, and internal communications to mark other dates including Mental Health Awareness Week and Anti-Bullying Week.
- 6.11 The Break Barriers, Open Doors events are organised in consultation with staff and service user groups and are always well-supported by senior leaders and managers. The events feature a diverse roster of inspiring speakers and facilitate discussion about the barriers, real and perceived, to equality that need to be broken down to enable every individual to thrive in Brent. During 2014 - 15, over 500 staff, service users and partners attended Break Barriers, Open Doors events.
- 6.12 The Break Barriers; Open Doors events complement our formal equality and diversity training programme that aims to equip all staff and managers to understand and fulfil their responsibilities in relation to equalities. We run mandatory training on: equality and diversity at Brent (including an overview of the Public Sector Equality Duty) and disability confidence for all staff; recruitment and selection (including unconscious bias) and equality analysis for all managers; and on providing excellent services in a diverse setting and mental health awareness for all customer-facing staff. Equalities considerations are incorporated into other mandatory training, such as procurement. All staff at Brent Housing Partnership completed a Level 2 NVQ in Equality and Diversity as part of its work towards achieving Leaders in Diversity in 2014.

Flexible working

- 6.13 In 2013 the council condensed 14 of its buildings into the new Brent Civic Centre. As well as providing a more accessible working environment for the majority of our staff to work in, the move to Brent Civic Centre marked the commencement of a flexible work programme to support staff work-life balance and improve productivity. Our revised Flexible Working Policy offers staff a range of different flexible working arrangements to suit the needs of each individual and service area. Brent won the Techworld Special Recognition Award for Innovation in Mobile Working in 2013 for our investment in technology to support flexible working, particularly home working.
- 6.14 Flexible working has become the norm at Brent: a survey in February 2015 found that 82 per cent of staff use one or more of the available flexible working practices. This has changed the relationship between employees and managers in that performance is now measured on outcomes and results, not presence. The success of flexible and remote working at Brent marks a significant culture change for local government. Staff have told us that flexible working arrangements have helped them to manage their work more effectively, to provide better services for residents and to carry out caring responsibilities without impacting on productivity.

Apprenticeship Scheme

- 6.15 In January 2014, the council launched the [Brent Council Apprenticeship Programme](#) to address rising levels of youth unemployment in the borough - which was especially

acute within BAME communities and the most deprived areas of Brent. As a major employer in the borough, we wanted to take a leadership role in championing the interests of young people and improving their employability and economic stability. We committed to offering 100 apprenticeship placements over three years and decided to reserve 20 per cent of the places for our Looked After Children to ensure that those young people who experience the greatest disadvantages and barriers to employment would be able to gain access to the programme.

- 6.16 The in-house apprenticeship scheme offers high quality learning and development and a nationally recognised vocational qualification to a wide cross section of local people aged 16 - 24. The programme has been an unqualified success and is now being expanded to provide further opportunities for local young people. Managers have provided excellent feedback and several of the apprentices have already secured permanent employment as a result of participating in the scheme. We introduced an Apprentice of the Year category to our staff awards in December 2014 in recognition of both the council's commitment to the programme and the contribution that apprentices have made to the council.

For more information about the Apprenticeship Scheme, please see Case Study 23 – Apprenticeship Scheme.

Employee engagement

- 6.17 Although Brent does not currently have staff diversity networks, we employ a range of mechanisms to engage and listen to staff at all levels of the council about their experiences and equality, diversity and inclusion issues, including:
- **Equality focus groups:** focus groups with staff and managers organised by the Equality Team. Over 100 people took part in focus groups in 2014 which shaped the Equality Strategy and the Annual Workforce Equalities Report. In April 2015, staff focus groups were used to develop guidance on reasonable adjustments for disabled staff, to develop a leadership programme to support staff from under-represented groups into senior management, and to assess levels of interest in staff diversity networks. As a result, the Corporate Management Team has agreed to re-establish a framework of staff equality networks with senior support.
 - **Staff surveys:** although financial pressures have not permitted us to undertake a comprehensive staff survey recently, we regularly undertake mini staff surveys on issues such as internal communications to engage with staff during organisational change. For example a recent building user survey resulted in the implementation of an improved offer in catering.
 - **Question Time events:** an opportunity for staff to ask questions or address comments directly to the Leader, the Deputy Leader and the Chief Executive and for senior management to hear about what matters to staff. A special Question Time Event was held to enable staff to feed into the development of the Brent Borough Plan 2015-19.
 - **Staff suggestion scheme:** a scheme that invites staff to make suggestions related to the council's priorities at any time for consideration by the

Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis. Recent suggestions have produced outcomes such as improved way-finding around the building and an initiative to publish team profiles with photographs on the organisation's intranet.

Investors in People

- 6.18 Investors in People is a business improvement tool that aims to help organisations develop and improve performance through effective people management. Brent achieved the Silver level of Investors in People in April 2014, which has only been achieved by six per cent of organisations. Following a rigorous assessment, Investors in People concluded that:
- staff are very positive about working for Brent and are extremely committed to the council
 - there is a clear golden thread between the individual, team and the council
 - good people management practices such as regular one to ones and team meetings are in place
 - Brent has an extremely high completion rate for performance appraisals
 - equalities monitoring is seen as of high importance
 - our corporate induction is engaging and effective
 - there are many examples of high quality and innovative learning and development opportunities which have equipped staff to meet the diverse needs of local communities.
- 6.19 We are now working towards the Gold level of Investors in People because we want to keep getting the best out of our staff during the challenging times ahead for local government. We are improving our people management practices by: focusing on our vision and values in everything that we do; increasing the visibility and openness of senior leaders; evaluating the impact of our learning and development offer; and improving our talent management and progression of BAME staff.

7. Our next steps

- 7.1 We are proud of what Brent has achieved so far and the progress we have made on equality, diversity and inclusion for residents, service users and staff. We are committed to our vision of making Brent a great place to live and work, where people feel that they have real opportunities to change their lives for the better. We intend to achieve this vision, even in the context of some of the most pressing financial challenges experienced in public services for decades and increased demand for our services from a growing population with more complex needs.
- 7.2 Our journey towards the Excellent level of the EFLG has helped us to strengthen our structures, systems and practices. It has informed our Corporate Plan, our Equality Strategy and our objectives as a council. It has provided us with a clearer picture of where we are already achieving great equality outcomes for residents and staff and where we want to see improvements. We are committed to the ongoing improvement of our equality and diversity practices and to providing inclusive, accessible services that meet the diverse needs of all our residents.
- 7.3 Our next steps involve everyone with a stake in the borough working closely together with a clear focus on our common goals. In the coming years, we will:

Become more confident in our understanding of local communities by:

- working with partner agencies to develop a greater range of service user diversity profiles
- reviewing progress in implementing the Brent Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019 and achieving our equality objectives annually.

Continue to improve our leadership and partnership equalities work by:

- speaking out to challenge further cuts in central government funding that impact on our most vulnerable residents
- revising the equalities aspects of our procurement process in response to central government changes to procurement.

Enhance the involvement of our communities by:

- introducing new and creative forms of community engagement that engage all equality groups to build more cohesive, resilient communities and find ways of providing services that are more finely tailored to local needs
- matching 1,000 new volunteers a year to placements with local community groups to harness the potential of local people to use their skills and experiences for the benefit of their neighbourhoods.

Ensure we continue to respond to the changing need of our service users by:

- evaluating the impact of our refreshed approach to equality analysis
- implementing the Community Access Programme.

Continue to build a diverse, skilled and committed workforce by:

- implementing the HR and Equalities Policy Review action plan
- establishing a framework of staff equality networks with senior support
- undertaking a full staff survey to collect more detailed information about our workforce's views and experiences so that we can improve our practices.

Appendix 1: The Diversity of Brent

Age

Brent has an increasingly young population: since 2001 the number of under five year olds has increased by 37 per cent and those aged 5-19 years have increased by seven per cent. All children's age groups saw increases between 2001 and 2011, with the 10-14 age group experiencing a nine per cent increase and the 15-19 age group 12 per cent. However the growth of population is not limited to our younger residents. Figures currently indicate that 12.9 per cent of Brent is over the age of 65 (the equivalent of one in every eight people). The population aged over 65 and over increased by nine per cent over the last five years and is projected to increase by a further 11 per cent over the next five years; the population aged over 85 has increased by 24 per cent in the last five years and is projected to increase by 31 per cent over the next five years. We are seeing a gradual change to the ethnicity of our older population too - currently a third of Brent's population aged 85 and over are BAME.

Disability and health

The proportion of Brent residents who feel they have 'good health' increased from 70.2 per cent in 2001 to 82.9 per cent in 2011. 15.6 per cent of Brent's population stated in the 2011 census that they had a limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability and 4.7 per cent of our residents define themselves as permanently sick or disabled. One in seven Brent residents in 2011 considered that their health had a limiting impact on their day to day activities. This is comparable to the rate for London (14.2 per cent) and is 3.4 per cent lower than the rate for England and Wales. Seven per cent of residents felt their day to day activities were limited a lot and 7.5 per cent felt they were limited a little. The majority of residents who felt that their day to day activities were limited were aged 65 and over. In 2014, 0.8 per cent of Brent residents who were working age (16-64) were claiming disability benefits.

Mental health problems affect one in six people in Brent, and there are approximately 9,000 people in our borough who live with a learning disability. Of these, approximately 1,000 have a learning disability defined as 'severe'.

Ethnicity and language

Brent was the first borough in the country to have a majority BAME population. The diversity of our borough has continued to increase, swelled by recent economic migrants from Eastern Europe and continued growth in the borough's Asian population.

The BAME groups increased their share of the population from 55 per cent in 2001 to 64 per cent in 2011. This is the second highest proportion in England and Wales. The broad BAME group *Asian* or *Asian British* accounts for 33 per cent of Brent's population, and *Black* or *Black British* for 19 per cent. The *White* ethnic group saw a reduction in its proportion from 45 per cent in 2001 to 36 per cent in 2011, with *White British* and *White Irish* also in decline. In contrast, Brent's percentage of residents identifying as *White Other* increased to 14.3 per cent.

A 2011 school census found that 149 languages were spoken in Brent. The national census showed that English was the main language in 57 per cent of Brent households, this was the

2nd lowest rate for any borough in England and Wales. 1.3 per cent of the population in Brent cannot speak English.

Pregnancy & Maternity

The General Fertility Rate (GFR) is the number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15-44. The GFR in Brent in 2012 was 72, higher than both the national rate of 64.8 and the rate in Outer London of 71.8. There were 7,430 conceptions to all women in Brent in 2011, with 17 of these to women aged under 16. The conception rate for all women in Brent was 99 per 1,000 (again higher than both the national and London rates of 80.4 and 89.5 respectively). For women aged under 16, the conception rate in Brent was almost half (3.2 per 1000) the rate for England and Wales (6.1 per 1000).

Religion or belief

In addition to ethnic diversity, Brent has the highest proportion of active faith adherents in England, with over 80 per cent of residents having a religious belief. The largest religion followed in Brent is Christian at 41.5 per cent, however this has declined proportionally from 47.7 per cent in 2001. The number of Muslims has increased between 2001 and 2011, and Muslims now represent the second biggest religious group in Brent at 18.6 per cent of the population. The number of people of Muslim faith in the borough has now overtaken those who identify as Hindu, who currently make up 17.8 per cent of the borough's population.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

An issue in Brent is the low visibility of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, as under-reporting continues to be a problem (coupled with there being no specific question on the Census). The LGBT charity Stonewall estimate that around six per cent of the population identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, although in London the figure is estimated to be more like ten per cent. This means that between 18,000 and 31,000 people in Brent can be expected to belong to the LGB community, with approximately one per cent of the population identifying as transgender if national estimates are correct.

Income

Between 2007 and 2010 Brent's position in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) declined, and the borough is now ranked as the 32nd most deprived in the country, from a position of 52nd in 2007 and 84th in 2002. Three of our wards now fall within the top ten per cent most deprived in the country, particularly in relation to measures of child poverty, lack of employment and poor housing conditions. The median household income in 2014 is £31,601, which makes Brent the 6th lowest borough in London for this indicator. There are huge differences in deprivation levels across the borough, with 30 per cent of households living on an annual income of £15,000 or less (including benefits) and in our most deprived wards, 50 per cent living on £15,000 or less.

Education and Employment

Adult skills levels are low with 44 per cent of the adult population having NVQ level one or below and five per cent with no formal qualifications. 28 per cent of Brent residents hold NVQ level 4 or above, compared to the London average of 42 per cent holding NVQ4 or above.

Up until April 2008, Brent had seen a steady increase in the number of people entering employment, reaching a high point of 72 per cent of the population in work. However, by September 2010 the recession had reduced the employed population to 64 per cent, with a significant proportion of job losses being in the service sectors and disproportionately affecting women. Our Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant rate is 5.9 per cent, and the current figures show 11.9 unemployed people per job centre registered vacancy. The increase in women's unemployment is higher and more women are now reporting themselves as economically inactive. The number of jobs per resident is low at 0.64 per resident, in comparison to London at 0.88.