



Brent Council Equality Strategy 2019-2023



Foreword

The council has a huge role to play in promoting equality of opportunity and we place a lot of importance on this. We want to make Brent a fairer, more inclusive place to live and work, where people receive services that are appropriate to them. We want to remove inequality.

I was pleased to see such a positive response to our recent Equality Matters consultation. It showed that other people place a lot of importance on equality and diversity too. Your views have helped us to develop our equality objectives – the areas we will focus on over the four years of this strategy.



We will continue to engage with our vibrant communities – both longer-established groups and our new arrivals, those who are vulnerable and those at risk of being marginalised – to ensure their and all voices are heard.

**Councillor Margaret McLennan, Deputy Leader,
London Borough of Brent**

The London Borough of Brent is one of the most culturally diverse areas in the United Kingdom. We are extremely proud of this and believe it is one of our strongest assets.

We have been awarded the title of London Borough of Culture 2020 and this will be a year-long celebration of cultural diversity.

Now and always, we want to ensure that we are meeting the needs of everyone who lives, works and studies in Brent. To do this, we need to make equality and diversity practices a part of everyday business. This Equality Strategy has been developed in order to help us do just that. It is our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion for the next four years.

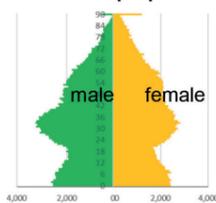
Following consultation with all of our partners and with the help of Brent residents and workers, we have determined our vision for equality in Brent over the next four years:

Removing inequality – building a better Brent

Our vision

Context

36 is the average age of the population



Disability
14% of residents have a disability
1 in 20 residents compared to
1 in 2 disabled residents  **do not access the internet**

pregnancy
4th highest birth rate in London

3 out of **4** births were to mothers born outside the UK

Sex
62% of the 85+ population is female

1 in 3 women compared to **1 in 6** men **work part-time**

Gender reassignment
0.007% of the UK population has a gender reassignment certificate. This equates to **18** people in Brent

Marriage or civil partnership
43% of residents are married 
0.3% of residents are in a civil partnership

Religion or belief
82% of residents have a religion
 **41%** Christian
 **19%** Muslim
 **18%** Hindu

Race
65% of the population is BAME background
 **37%** Do not speak English as a main language

Sexual orientation
4.6% of residents identify as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual
 Young adults are 4 times more likely to identify as LGBT than their older counterparts

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the public sector equality duty (PSED), which means that public bodies such as the council must consider everyone when conducting their day-to-day work, shaping their policies and delivering services. The Act also outlines the 'protected characteristics' – the specific aspects of identity which are protected from discrimination. As an organisation providing services to a diverse community, it is vital for us to consider the protected characteristics in all we do.

The nine protected characteristics are:

- + Age
- + Disability
- + Gender reassignment
- + Marriage and civil partnership
- + Pregnancy and maternity
- + Race
- + Religion or belief
- + Sex
- + Sexual orientation

The PSED requires public bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to:

- + **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation** and other conduct prohibited by the act
- + **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- + **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition to these 'general' duties, there are also 'specific' duties – requiring us to prepare and publish equality information annually and equality objectives every four years.

The Equality Duty



Consultation

To develop our equality objectives for the next four years, we felt it necessary to consult with the community and our partners. We tried to reach as many people and make the consultation as accessible as possible, reaching out to residents as well as Brent councillors, employees, voluntary sector organisations and other stakeholders.

A consultation questionnaire was created that was published online and made available in hardcopy. An 'easy-read' version was also produced, to enable responses from those with learning disabilities. Additionally, a range of consultation activities were held within the council and across the borough:

- + Library pop-up events
- + Community events such as Brent Youth Parliament; Disability forum
- + Council team meetings
- + Brent Connects meetings
- + Face-to-face meetings with local voluntary sector groups
- + BSL video was produced and posted on Youtube
- + Wide-ranging online presence, including Brent website and information on social media

We used the consultation to ask a number of key questions.

We proposed a vision for equality and asked people to what extent they agreed/ disagreed with the statement. Respondents were also asked whether they had any ideas

about additional or alternative things to be included in the vision. We suggested several different equalities objectives. Respondents were asked to comment on these and indicate which they felt should be Brent's top three priorities. They could also suggest additional objectives. Respondents were asked what areas of inequality they felt the council should focus on.

We also asked respondents how the council could best keep people informed about its work on equalities.

The questionnaire was open to everyone - Brent residents, staff, businesses and voluntary and community organisations - and over 200 responses were received.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the process and the development of the equality vision and objectives.

Our objectives

THE VISION

The vast majority of respondents – 77% - either strongly agreed or agreed with our suggested vision. However, some people felt it was too long and wordy. We have listened to this and have made the vision more concise as a result.

OBJECTIVES

Rather than overstretch, the council should focus on fewer objectives and do them well.

The following three equality objectives were selected through the consultation process as our priorities for the next four years.

1 Understand the barriers to equality experienced in Brent and act to remove them

Barriers to equality consist of discrimination based around the protected characteristics.

We need to ensure an equal focus on all the protected characteristics and make services available to all.

By improving the equality monitoring information we collect, we can tailor services and better understand the barriers to equality.

2 Provide accessible information and services that are tailored to peoples' needs

Many respondents stressed the importance of accessibility of services, in various forms: Increasing digital access among residents with lower rates of usage, promoting access to community hubs; providing information to customers in accessible formats; ensuring meetings venues are easily accessible for all; access to English language support for those that need it; and making more information available in easy-read formats. We will do these things as part of our locality-based approach to working.

Some respondents expressed concern around the digitalisation of services, that those who do not use the internet may get 'left behind'. We will support increased digital access whilst ensuring that the needs of non-users are also met.

Language barriers have been identified in Brent (over 149 languages are spoken). We need to look at where we can provide further support, perhaps promoting English as a Second Language classes or using social value in our contracts to support employment amongst these groups.

3 Tackle hate, harassment and victimisation

We know from previous consultations undertaken that tackling hate, harassment and victimisation are amongst the most important issues for Brent residents. Respondents highlighted problems such as hate crimes against people based on race or disability and the need for safe spaces for LGBT people. It was also stressed that schools must teach children about diversity, particularly in an area as diverse as Brent.

In addition to these three objectives, we have developed a

fourth objective focused on Brent Council staff:

4 Lead the way in encouraging diversity to flourish in Brent

We will continue to develop our workforce to ensure they have the tools necessary to provide effective services to our diverse community. We will also continue to recognise and celebrate the strengths that our diversity and inclusion brings.

These objectives, and our aims under the Public Sector Equality Duty, underpin all our work towards our Borough Plan, and making Brent a place where people value the principles of fairness and equality.



Our vision
for equality,
diversity and
inclusion

Removing inequality – building a better Brent

MONITORING

We want to ensure consistency in the delivery of equality across the council. Equality is cross-departmental and part of everyday business. It is the duty of all of us to understand, respect and value difference. We will create an action plan setting out how we will measure progress against these objectives. The action plan will be reviewed regularly, and updated in each of the four years of this strategy. We will engage with all our partners on the progress we make against the objectives.

The council conducts Equality Analyses (EAs) to ensure decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way which considers the needs and rights of different individuals and communities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Cabinet: To consider equality implications in its decision-making; advance equality of opportunity in each portfolio area. Cabinet will receive updates on progress against the objectives during the year.

Scrutiny: To ensure checks are made with regard to the delivery of equalities.

All elected members: To be a community leader for equalities.

Central Management Team: To provide strategic leadership in the delivery of the council's equalities objectives, and will receive reports on progress during the year.

Senior managers: To promote equalities awareness: through the objectives; through learning and development opportunities and through business planning.

Contractors: To comply with equality duties set out in the Equality Act 2010.

All council staff: To comply with the requirements of the approach, apply good practice and foster good relations with all stakeholders.

Further information can be found on the equality and diversity section of the council's website.



Brent