



Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

16 June 2008

Report from the Director of Children and Families

Wards Affected:
ALL

Equalities Impact of School Places provision in the south of the borough

Forward Plan Ref:

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report explores current school provision within Brent across the north and south of the Borough and the impact current provision has on equalities issues across the Borough.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the general pressure on school places, population projections which will further increase pressure on places and the Council's plans to provide additional places.
- 2.2 To note the extent to which parental preference determines the distance travelled to school.
- 2.3 That members note the correspondence between the Council and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), which details the Council's plans to increase the provision of school places across the Borough including significant expansion in the south.

3.0 Detail

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Brent is the most diverse local authority in the country and one of only two Council's with a majority Black and Minority Ethnic population. ONS data also reveals that Wembley is the only area of

the country where the majority of local residents were actually born outside of the UK.

The 2001 Census reports BME residents constitute 54.7% of Brent's total population of 263,464, and at 7% of the total, Brent has the highest Irish community in England and Wales. Since the 2001 Census Brent's population has continued to increase year-by-year and is currently estimated at around 276,000.

Within Brent primary and secondary schools the percentage of children of BME origin is 74% (and this proportion is growing) and no fewer than 59 of the Council's 74 schools have a BME majority school population. Brent is therefore becoming even more multi-racial with a growing BME majority population throughout the borough. Contrary to a seemingly widely held view Brent is not a borough polarised between a White and Asian population in the north and a Black population in the south. In fact Brent is truly multi-racial with people of different backgrounds living throughout the Borough.

Location and Geography

Brent is a compact borough seven miles by four. Brent has borders with Harrow, Barnet, Camden, Westminster, RBKC and Ealing. The North Circular Road is a landmark used to distinguish between North and South of Brent, but does not geographically define two equal halves of the borough. The south of Brent tapers to a wedge shape, where Brent borders with Camden and Westminster. Historically, many families have chosen schools in neighbouring boroughs which are very close to where they live.

Population Dispersal

There is not an equal dispersal of people across the Borough, but a slight skew to the North in terms of population. According to the 2001 census; 51.2% of the population live in wards in the North of the borough, with 48.8% living in the South. When looking at the 'school age' population, it skews even more, with 52.8% of 0-17 year olds living in the North and 47.2% living in the South.

Travelling distance to school

The majority of primary aged children attend their local school. Analysis in December 2007 of the distance reception aged children were travelling to school showed that 2,547 or 79% travelled less than one mile to school, with a further 344 or 11% travelling between one and two miles. The remainder were children travelling longer distances to attend faith schools, particularly Jewish schools and special schools. There was no marked difference in distances travelled to school between north and south Brent. **See Appendix 1**

Data from the January 2007 census shows that fewer people living in the north travel more than 3 miles to get to a Brent School (3%) than those living in the south (11.8%). However, 88.18% of pupils living in the south travel less than 3 miles as do 93.37% of pupils living in the north.

Ward Geog	over 3 miles	% over 3	under 3 miles	% under 3	Total
Total	863	6.63	12147	93.37	13010
North	234	3.04	7454	96.96	7688
South	629	11.82	4693	88.18	5322

The January 2007 census showed the average distance a pupil living in the north travelled to a Brent school is just over 1 mile; the figure for those living in the south is less than 1.5 miles. DCSF guidance is that up to three miles is a reasonable distance for pupil's aged 8 – 16 to travel to school. Pupils travel longer distances to attend faith schools in both the primary and secondary sector.

School Places Consultation

The Council has recently carried out extensive consultation on its strategy for the future provision of school places. A survey was delivered to every household in Brent within the Brent Magazine. Just under 900 surveys were returned. Respondents were asked a series of questions around equal access to school places. Participants were asked if they felt disadvantaged in obtaining a place for their children due to their ethnicity, gender, faith, disability or any other reason. Over two thirds of participants did not feel that they were disadvantaged due to any of the four main diversity strands. 77% did not feel they were disadvantaged in obtaining a school place for their children in relation to their ethnic background.

Growth in pupil numbers

Brent has a rapidly growing population across the borough and needs at least 2,300 extra places by 2014. The Council's projections of pupil numbers have been accepted by the Department for Children and Families (DCSF) 13 of the 14 secondary schools in Brent are full and maintaining substantial waiting lists. The Council plans to meet the increase in demand by providing several new schools and expanding existing schools right across the borough both in the north and the south. The Council is planning to expand four secondary schools in the south of Brent. A recent proposal has been made for two of the schools proposed for expansion to become academies.

Parental choice

All parents have a right to express a preference for schools of their choice. This choice cannot be fettered artificially by borough boundaries, parents can freely apply for schools within and outside of Brent's borders. In line with their parent's wishes the majority of primary aged children attend their local school. While there has been increased pressure on school places in all parts of Brent there is still some spare capacity in primary schools in the south of the borough. This allows more choice for parents.

Many parents choose to apply to secondary schools some distance from their homes for a wide variety of reasons including faith, specialism, or simply because they consider a particular school to be suitable for their child. Schools in north Brent are more heavily oversubscribed than those in the south of the borough. Many parent's living in the south choose to apply for places at north Brent schools.

Meeting parental preference

Parents can express a preference for, and rank in order of preference up to six schools at 11+ transfer. Each local authority is responsible for co coordinating applications for their own residents and transferring information across London boroughs. The tables below show the numbers of Brent children transferring to secondary school in September 2006, September 2007 and September 2008 and to the degree their parent's preferences were met.

2006						
Numbers of children			Percentages			
	Total	North	South	Total	North	South
1st Pref	1999	1034	965	76.77	39.71	37.06
2nd	317	184	133	12.17	7.07	5.11
3rd	165	91	74	6.34	3.49	2.84
4th	74	32	42	2.84	1.23	1.61
5th	31	18	13	1.19	0.69	0.50
6th	18	9	9	0.69	0.35	0.35
Total	2604	1368	1236	100.00	52.53	47.47

2007						
Numbers of children				Percentages		
	Total	North	South	Total	North	South
1st Pref	1962	1009	953	76.34	39.26	37.08
2nd	332	172	160	12.92	6.69	6.23
3rd	150	77	73	5.84	3.00	2.84
4th	72	34	38	2.80	1.32	1.48
5th	32	14	18	1.25	0.54	0.70
6th	22	10	12	0.86	0.39	0.47
Total	2570	1316	1254	100.00	51.21	48.79

2008						
Numbers of children				Percentages		
	Total	North	South	Total	North	South
1st Pref	1949	1029	920	73.66	38.89	34.77
2nd	354	188	166	13.38	7.11	6.27
3rd	190	89	101	7.18	3.36	3.82
4th	89	40	49	3.36	1.51	1.85
5th	44	23	21	1.66	0.87	0.79
6th	20	6	14	0.76	0.23	0.53
Total	2646	1375	1271	100.00	51.97	48.03

For 2008 transfer the difference in parental preference being met based on residence in either the north or the south of the borough is less than 4%. The Council's plans for additional places will increase capacity, allow more parental choice, and increase the percentage of families who secure their first preference school.

Cross borough exports and imports

Brent, like all London boroughs has significant cross border movement of pupils. PLASC data for January 2008 shows Of the 41,981 pupils attending Brent schools 7,160 (17.06%) reside outside the borough. This figure has increased from 2007.

Data from the DCSF based on the January 2007 figures show that 3,686 Brent secondary aged pupils attended out borough schools as shown in the breakdown below.

Secondary aged pupil exports	January	2007			
Camden	450	Wandsworth	8	Hillingdon	67
Hammersmith and Fulham	256	Westminster	483	Hounslow	39
Haringey	5	Barnet	1095	Kingston upon Thames	3
Islington	7	Ealing	413	Richmond	5
Kensington and Chelsea	170	Harrow	685		

DCSF figures for January 2007 show the secondary imports as 3159 from the boroughs as below.

Secondary aged pupil imports	January	2007			
				Bedfordshire	3
Camden	101	Enfield	46	Hillingdon	25
Hammersmith and Fulham	100	Westminster	269	Hounslow	3
Haringey	44	Barnet	920	Lambeth	5
Islington	9	Ealing	259	Hackney	22
Kensington and Chelsea	136	Harrow	891	Hertfordshire	326

There are similar patterns of secondary aged pupil movement across all London boroughs.

Race Equality Impact Assessment

A complaint was made by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) to the Commission for Racial Equality, alleging that the Council failed to carry out an equality impact assessment in relation to the proposed Wembley Park Academy, on what they believed to be 'a substantial imbalance in secondary mixed non denominational school provision' which had a more detrimental effect on the predominantly black secondary school age residents living in parts of south Brent. The Council undertook an appropriate race equality impact assessment in planning for the proposed Wembley Park Academy. This was considered and taken into account by the Council's decision making Executive. There has been no legal challenge of any kind to the decision of the Executive to locate a new Academy at the Wembley Park site or any further action by the CRE. Copies of the correspondence and a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment are attached as **Appendix 2**

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The important factor of parental preference in school places means that cross-border movements is an inevitable feature within all London Boroughs and within Brent in the North as much as it is in the South.

- 4.2 The Council is already doing a great deal to increase the provision of School Places within the South with plans to increase places by between 900 and 1200 in the South.
- 4.3 A full Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken in relation to proposals to build a new Academy in Wembley and this was fully considered by the executive.

Background Papers

Letter to CRE 1st August 2007

Letter to CRE 9th October 2007

Letter to EHRE 7th December 2007

Race Equality Impact Assessment re proposed Wembley Academy

Contact Officers

John Christie

Director of Children and Families