

Brent's People Strategy 2007 – 2010

Introduction

The Corporate Strategy 2006 -10 sets out the Council's ambitions for improving the borough and the quality of life of its residents. Our staff and managers are central to delivering the Corporate Strategy. The outcomes expected by Brent's communities - excellent services that give value for money, improved quality of life, opportunities for all, respect and tolerance between communities – will only be achieved through these staff and managers.

This makes our people the organisations most important asset. For Brent to become one of the best local councils in the country, we need to create the conditions in which our staff can succeed in meeting the expectations of Brent's residents.

The People Strategy 2007 - 2010

We must build on our existing strengths to create an innovative, continuously improving organisation with a high performance culture that delivers the Council's ambitious agenda.

The People Strategy 2007 -10 provides the route map for creating and sustaining the conditions for success, ensuring that:

- the organisation has the right people with the right skills in the right jobs and at the right cost
- the environment and conditions exist for those people to thrive and perform
- the planning and delivery of its priorities is based on and takes full account of the organisation's people resources

Brent already has a strong foundation in place, reflected in the high levels of staff loyalty and satisfaction in working for the Council, as well as significant, wide-ranging performance improvements. The People Strategy aims to build on this foundation.

It sets out the Council's vision for the type of employer it aims to be, the strategic people issues and priorities that impact on achievement of the Corporate Strategy, key actions for meeting these priorities and the targets and measures for assessing their delivery. It forms an integral part of the Council's Corporate Strategy and improvement programmes and provides the overall framework for all Brent's human resource (HR) and people-related plans.

It is a strategy for and in support of the organisation. All managers need to understand the part they play in contributing to achieving its vision. All staff need to understand how the Council will support them, and its expectations of them as their employer. HR is responsible for delivering the Strategy through the supporting action plans and programmes.

Our Vision

A great place to work

We want staff to feel proud they work for Brent, and prospective employees to consider the Council as their first choice employer.

We will offer a creative and supportive environment, where innovation and problem-solving is encouraged and rewarded. Staff will get satisfaction from their work, feel valued and supported by their managers, get appropriate development opportunities and consider they are making an important contribution in meeting residents' needs.

The Council already has high levels of staff satisfaction, as shown by the staff surveys. It is already seen as a great place to work. We want to build on this, to ensure we attract the best, as well as offering Brent staff opportunities to develop their skills and careers in the Council.

A high performance, customer-centred organisation

We expect all staff to be rigorously focused on delivering high quality services and putting customers first.

Our whole workforce¹ will actively engage with and be committed to continuous improvement. Individuals, teams and departments will be well managed and led, focusing on achieving outcomes for customers and addressing underperformance. To embed a performance culture we will ensure our workforce is informed, skilled, empowered and adaptable in order to meet residents' expectations.

The Council has made significant progress on the improvement journey. More than three quarters of our performance indicators have improved since 2002/03 and we have a growing reputation with partners for the quality of our work. We will continue to relentlessly pursue the goal of excellence.

One inclusive and diverse team

We are one organisation with a shared purpose, goals and priorities. At the same time we are proud that our workforce reflects our highly diverse, black and ethnic majority, multi-cultural borough.

We recognise the different responsibilities within service areas, while at the same time understanding we must all work together to achieve our shared agenda.

Our workforce diversity is a key attribute and part of Brent's unique service proposition. Involving all our staff in the way we develop services enables us to better meet and reflect the diverse needs and cultural requirements of our customer and community base. We recognise the need to improve diversity in some areas and across our leadership teams. We are committed to doing this.

¹ Workforce – includes the employees, temporary workers and contractors involved in providing Brent services.

Strategic Priorities

The Improving Brent Action Plan provides the framework for delivering Brent's Corporate Strategy and the key improvement themes and priorities for 2006-10. Based on these themes and priorities and an assessment of the key people challenges facing Brent, we have identified the following as the Council's strategic people priorities for the next three years:

- achieving consistent excellence in people and performance management throughout the council
- developing an organisational culture that supports continuous improvement and learning
- addressing recruitment and retention priorities by developing the skills and capacity of our existing workforce
- improving the efficiency, productivity and flexibility of our workforce
- rapidly accelerating partnership and multi-disciplinary working
- improving diversity across the council

Priority 1: Achieving Consistent Excellence in People and Performance Management across the Council

Performance management and people management are inextricably linked: the delivery of high quality services requires high performing staff.

The performance and capability of Brent's managers is therefore vital to our continuing success. All managers are responsible for effectively leading and managing their services and teams. We need to ensure that wherever they are - from the front line to our 'top' managers - Brent's managers are consistently excellent in the key areas of managing people, performance and resources.

Our **overall aim** is to develop the core skills and capacity of all Brent managers.

Our **objectives** are to ensure that:

- the role and key expectations of Brent managers are clear
- the authority's performance management and appraisal system is fit for purpose, understood and consistently implemented throughout the Council
- all line managers understand their role in managing and developing their staff
- managers are able to use and apply HR policies and procedures with confidence
- all managers are able to motivate, lead and manage diverse teams and service areas.
- all managers are competent in managing and improving staff and service performance in accordance with the Council's agreed procedures

Actions

For managers to meet these expectations they must operate within a clear 'management framework' that gives them the necessary skills, processes, mechanisms, tools and support to perform effectively in their staff management role. These include:

- a clear role specification
- effective staff supervision and appraisal mechanisms
- effective communication mechanisms
- HR policies that are 'fit for purpose'
- management development programmes
- high level HR support

A comprehensive overhaul of the management framework is already underway to tackle the gaps and weaknesses, including:

- management Charter setting out the key expectations for Brent managers
- revised management competency framework for all levels of management including people management & development skills and responsibilities
- revised 360 degree management appraisal system and revised staff appraisal
- profile management skills levels and development needs via development centres
- a comprehensive, flexible, competency-based general management development programme including mandatory and personal development
- coaching for managers/peer support mechanisms

Priority 2: Developing an Organisational Culture that Supports Continuous Improvement and Learning

The drive for continuous improvement is at the heart of all our work. We need to continuously challenge how we are performing in relation to our residents' expectations.

Reviewing our performance and evaluating outcomes needs to become a natural conversation at every level of the Council. For this to happen, all managers and staff need to understand and be equipped with the tools to improve their own performance and that of their services and teams. Service improvement and quality management methods and related skills need to be developed across our workforce.

The many areas of good practice in the Council need to be widely exploited. We need to learn from each other, as well as from national best practice in all sectors. This learning and development needs to take place at individual, team and organisational levels and be clearly linked to performance and improvement.

Our **overall aim** is to ensure that continuous improvement is built into the way all staff and managers work.

Our **objectives** are to ensure that:

- staff and managers understand the service and performance standards and objectives they are expected to achieve
- all staff and managers have the knowledge, skills and tools required to continuously improve performance, quality and services
- staff and managers that perform well are recognised and rewarded and that underperformance is addressed and challenged fairly and appropriately
- all staff are able to contribute their ideas, views and experiences to help to shape and develop services

Actions

Investors in People is Brent's strategic framework for linking and integrating people and performance management with learning and development. It provides the context for a range of mechanisms that will be put in place as part of implementing this Strategy, including:

- workforce planning to identify and develop service and improvement initiatives
- action learning programmes and quality / improvement circles

- accredited learning events
- benchmarking clubs
- internal and external networking activity
- disseminating internal good practice information and 'know-how
- annual Staff Awards Scheme to continue and results to be communicated throughout the year
- Member, management and staff development programmes including:
 - induction in new performance management and appraisal systems
 - quality and service improvement approaches and methods e.g. process mapping

Priority 3: Addressing Recruitment and Retention Priorities by Developing the Skills and Capacity of Our Existing Workforce

Recruitment and retention remains one of the top people priorities to be addressed across the Council.

Brent's areas of skill shortages include the ten top national local government occupational skills shortage areas², as well as a range of other key occupational and service areas. In today's tight labour market we need to act now to develop our future workforce.

We will continue to compete with other employers to recruit the best, but we must also look to our existing staff and how they can be developed to address current and emerging resource and skills requirements. By retaining and developing the skills and potential of existing staff there are clear benefits in reducing recruitment costs, tackling potential service and continuity gaps, as well as addressing the perception of staff that there is a lack of career opportunities in the Council.

Our **overall aim** is to develop the skills and capacity of our existing staff to create a workforce for the future

Our **objectives** are to:

- improve key skills and competencies for all staff and key occupational groups
- retain and develop talented staff to work in skills shortages areas and to improve career development and progression within and across the authority
- improve productivity and service levels by optimising the deployment of our scarce professional / specialist staff and upskilling support staff to provide more professional support services
- improve efficiency by using new flexible ways of working to increase capacity of our current and potential workforce

Actions

The departmental and corporate workforce development plans will set out an assessment of existing and future staffing requirements. They will be in place by April and provide the framework for a number of initiatives, including:

² social care, occupational therapy, environmental health, trading standards, planning, building control, educational psychologists, teaching (schools) , librarians and legal.

- revised recruitment policy and procedures
- targeted pre-employment schemes & work placements e.g working 4 Brent
- corporate career and accelerated development scheme agreed
- National Graduate Development Programme traineeships
- career pathways developed and implemented across the workforce by 2010

Priority 4: Improving the Efficiency, Productivity and Flexibility of Our Workforce

Our staff are Brent's primary asset in delivering value and services to our residents and customers.

We need to ensure that the way work is organised makes the best possible use of our staff resources, accommodation, time and available skills. Workforce remodeling through job redesign and the use of new IT solutions and business process re-engineering offers significant potential to improve productivity.

Workforce planning has already begun to identify skills deficits within the workforce that if addressed would improve productivity. Implementing a core skills framework for staff development will allow us to accelerate skills and improve capacity in these areas.

New ways of working can allow greater flexibility in working time and location to suit diverse customer and staff needs. There is further scope to use working arrangements including home, remote and tele-working to further improve and extend our service provision. They also offer more potential to offer flexible working across the council and could further aid recruitment and retention.³

Our **overall aim** is to maximise productivity and efficiency through effective use of technology, different ways of working and upskilling staff

Our **objectives** are to:

- develop and extend e-skills and implementation of new technology
- reduce our office based staff numbers and increase remote/home-based working
- raise core skills levels across the workforce
- increase staff and service flexibility through role redesign and new ways of working

Actions

The corporate and departmental workforce development plans will include:

- match ways of working with service, accommodation and staff needs

³ National research has identified projects which have extended service provision hours, without increasing pay costs through flexible working patterns. Other benefits include reduced sickness and absenteeism.

- reduce our office-based head count by agreed targets⁴
- productivity targets to improve service provision without increasing pay levels
- core skills audits and surveys
- workforce remodeling pilot exercises in priority areas

⁴ particularly in preparation for a move to a civic centre by 2011

Priority 5: Rapidly Accelerating Partnership and Multi-Disciplinary Working

Today we are a far more streamlined, flexible and networked organisation than before. But there continues to be a range of national and local drivers that require new ways of organising and working.

Cross-cutting priorities such as the new Community Health and Well-Being strategy require our people to work collaboratively and creatively, both within the Council and with external organisations. Our managers need to be able to lead and work effectively across 'traditional' professional or service boundaries and be skilled at operating in networks, partnerships and multi-disciplinary project teams.

The drive to continuously improve the value of our services is increasingly leading us to explore partnership, multi-agency and shared service options. This will mean new roles and skills will be required to operate within this dynamic and challenging environment.

Our **overall aim** is to equip managers and staff with the skills and capacity to work successfully within this environment

Our **objectives** are to ensure that:

- multi-disciplinary, partnership and team working, skills and systems including performance management are mainstreamed as a core competency for staff and managers.
- Brent managers are able to conduct themselves professionally and competently when working in formal and informal partnership or networking roles.
- staff and managers are empowered to work flexibly across internal and external boundaries for the benefit of our customers and residents.
- Brent partners are informed and engaged in Brent's performance agenda and priorities

Actions:

- guidance on partnership working for staff and members developed
- corporate and service-specific partnership and multidisciplinary skills⁵ and working arrangements identified and planned
- corporate and departmental learning and development programmes to include joint development programmes with partners and internal and external networking events and action learning activities.

⁵ e-skills, financial awareness, customer focus, team working, diversity awareness

Priority 6: Improving Diversity across the Council

Brent has already transformed its profile to achieve one of the most diverse Council workforces in the country.

We recognise the customer service benefits of staff that are able to reflect, appreciate, understand and address the needs and expectations of our diverse customer and stakeholder base.

We now need to maximise the benefits and unique potential of our diverse workforce: it is part of the Council's distinctive service proposition.

This is why we are committed to achieving the highest level of the local government equality standard as part of our overall performance management framework. Diversity and cultural awareness are core competencies for our whole workforce.

Our **overall aim** is to ensure that we maximise our resources by fairly harnessing and developing our workforce to meet the needs of Brent's diverse customers and community

Our **objectives** are to ensure that:

- Brent has an inclusive culture that values and celebrates diversity
- Brent actively develops and fairly rewards all our staff so that they can thrive and develop their individual potential wherever they are
- our workforce planning reflects all aspects of our diversity and the implications for our employment framework and policies
- every member of our workforce is able to use their own experiences to shape and improve services and performance for and within Brent's community

Actions:

- recruitment policy and procedures review
- single status and equal pay action plan
- targeted recruitment and development initiatives including:
 - BME career and management development programme
 - Support for disabled staff and applicants
 - Working 4 Brent scheme for unemployed residents
 - Targeted Work placements / traineeships
 - Anti-bullying / harassment campaign
 - Flexible working and Work-life balance strategy

- cultural awareness programmes and surveys
- flexible learning and development opportunities are available and include e-learning, management and professional development programmes.

People Strategy 2007 – 2010

Action Plan

What will be different in three years time?

- audited management skill levels improve consistently within the life of the strategy
- performance indicators improve in underachieving areas and across the Council
- annual staff survey results confirm that:
 - majority of staff aware of how job impacts on service and council performance
 - majority satisfied that they are able to input & progress improvement ideas
- reduction in recruitment and skills shortages
- increased levels of successful internal recruitment in relevant areas of skills shortages
- increased levels of representation of 'target' groups (e.g. women, BME and disabled staff) in skills shortage areas and management
- all staff achieve minimum national skills levels
- core skills levels improve consistently during life of this Strategy
- staff surveys confirm increasing % of staff involved in multi-disciplinary projects or activities
- BME staff make up 20% of top managers and 48% middle managers
- women represent 57% of all managers
- disabled staff constitute 4.8% of the workforce by Sept 2008 with 100% monitoring response rate by 2010
- annual staff surveys confirm increased staff satisfied that :
 - bullying and harassment is largely unknown in the council

- discrimination and unfair disadvantage are very rare within the organisation
- Brent continues to be recognized as having positive internal relationships

These key performance indicators and delivery of the action plan will be regularly monitored by the strategic HR group.

There will be quarterly monitoring reports to CMT, in conjunction with monitoring of the Corporate Strategy, and an annual review that will be reported to CMT and the Executive.

PRIORITY 1 Achieving consistent excellence in people and performance management throughout the Council					
Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
1. Define managers' roles and performance requirements	All managers have the core skills and capability to manage people, resources and performance.	Define and agree management competencies	Completed		CM
	Improved supervision and staff development	Define role of the line manager	Completed		CG
	More effective managers	Produce management and leadership development strategy and programme	Completed. Managers are now being identified for first tranche of programme.		MN/CM
2. Review HR policies/procedures and align to strategic objectives and business needs	Revised HR policies and procedures in place that meet the strategic HR test	Identify and revise priority policy areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ flexible retirement ▪ dignity at work ▪ discipline ▪ grievance ▪ time away from work ▪ managing workforce change 	Work underway	March 07 April 07 May 07 May 07 May 07 Sept 07 on-going during 07 on-going 07/08	SR
	Improved compliance with policies	Consult on proposed changes			
3. Implement integrated HR information system	Improved customer satisfaction	Communication programme for revised policies			
	New system in place and fully operational, including self-service system	Milestones identified in project plan	Project team and manager in place. Project plan agreed and delivery underway	Nov 07	SB/CM
	On demand and accurate management information is available	Communication and training	Some self-service will become available from June		
Managers and staff become more self-sufficient in accessing routine information			Full system implementation by November		

PRIORITY 1 Achieving consistent excellence in people and performance management throughout the Council					
Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
4. Improve HR information and availability	Range of easy to use information resources available for managers and staff Improved compliance with corporate policies Greater satisfaction with HR advice More effective managers	Redesign HR intranet pages		May 07	SR

PRIORITY 2 Developing an organisational culture that supports continuous improvement and learning					
Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
1. Integrate staff and performance management systems	Clear links between service and staff performance Managers and staff understand links	Link with new corporate PMMI		Mar 07	CG
2. Assess appraisal system	The council's improvement and performance management framework is easy to use and consistently implemented across the council	Review and revise management appraisal system Produce guidance Implement new appraisal system, including management training		April 07 for start of new appraisal cycle in 07	CM
3. Ensure that L&D plans, programmes and frameworks are in place to support people development	Council-wide, integrated L& D planning framework linked to WDPs, service plans and the Corporate Strategy Better use of limited resources More effective staff development, linked to improved performance and service delivery	Produce a corporate L&D strategy and plan Develop the corporate training programme	See priority 2 above Work is underway	April 07 April 07	TC/ SHRMs TC/ SHRMs
		Produce local L&D plans	SHRMs have drafted local plans for collective consideration by the strategic HR management team	March	All
		Review professional L&D in departments and develop proposals for future	Will start in April	Sept	All

PRIORITY 2 Developing an organisational culture that supports continuous improvement and learning					
Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
4. Implement new L&D delivery model	Strategic L&D function established	Develop the new L&D delivery model	Model agreed and structures in place.	Feb 07	TC
	L&D more effectively supports improvement		External recruitment underway		
	Improved value for money from L&D spend	Produce a new corporate training programme	Underway	April 07	MN
		Undertake initial assessment for corporate training/development centre	Initial proposals drafted	March 07	TC
		Develop final proposals		June 07	
		Implement agreed option		June 08	
5. Develop a range of learning networks and mechanisms for managers and staff	Structured dissemination of good practice throughout the organisation Benefits of service improvement maximised	Identify internal and external best practice		June 07	TC
		Create e-learning tools to utilize best practice		Sept 07	
		Programme of learning events		Feb 08	
		Pilot improvement networks for managers and staff		Feb 08	
		Expand internal improvement networks		July 08	

PRIORITY 3 Addressing recruitment and retention priorities by developing the skills and capacity of our existing workforce

Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
1. Implement a robust workforce development planning framework	<p>Current and future staffing requirements identified and managed in line with corporate and service priorities</p> <p>Organisational change handled more effectively</p> <p>A more flexible and responsive organisation</p>	Produce local and corporate WDPs		Feb 07	SRHRMs
	Staff possess the skill and capabilities to fill key skill, recruitment and retention gaps whilst promoting fair developmental opportunities	Develop competencies for all staff		Sept 07	CM
		Develop targeted L&D opportunities		April 07	MN
		Implement the leadership programme		April 07	MN
		Undertake a skills audits as part of recruitment and retention strategy		March 08	All
2. Develop a comprehensive approach to recruitment and retention	<p>Prioritised, targeted programmes in place that address critical people resource issues across the Council</p> <p>More efficient recruitment</p> <p>Reduced recruitment costs</p> <p>Improved employer brand</p> <p>Improved service delivery</p>	Produce a recruitment and retention strategy		Sept 07	MN
		Review recruitment policy and procedures		May 07	SR/MN
		Develop new skills and career pathways		March 08	MN
		Talent management and succession planning initiatives		April 08	MN
		Specific HR plans are produced for key corporate change initiatives e.g. Olympics and new civic centre		April 08	CG/MN

PRIORITY 3 Addressing recruitment and retention priorities by developing the skills and capacity of our existing workforce					
Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
3. Develop a comprehensive approach to remuneration and reward	An integrated, managed approach to R&R that offers staff greater flexibility Improved staff motivation Contributes to improved recruitment & retention	Produce a remuneration and reward package		Proposals Sept 07 Implement from April 08	CM
4. Develop a health, safety and well-being programme	Staff are safe within their working environment and supported to maximize their own safety and well-being. Improved staff motivation	Produce a strategy and plan linked to the new corporate and people strategy		May 07	CG
		Revise attendance management policy		May 07	CG/SN
		Review corporate approaches to H&S		May 08	CG
		Review the occupational health contract		March 08	CG
		Develop a well-being initiative plan		Jan 07 onwards	CG

PRIORITY 4 Improving the efficiency, productivity and flexibility of our workforce

Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
1. Match ways of working with service, accommodation and staff needs	Better use of resources More flexible services for customers	Identify and prioritise services for review within context of WDPs & service plans Undertake 'ways of working' reviews with managers & staff Implement findings		end '07 during '08 during '09	SHRMs
2. Reduce our office-based head count by agreed targets	Cash savings More flexible ways of working for staff More flexible services for customers	Identify impact of Civic Centre project on staff requirements & ways of working Develop programme to manage changes & agree with CMT Implement programme		end '07 end '07 during '08/'09	TC
3. Productivity targets to improve service provision without increasing pay levels	Improved value for money	Assess how cost impact of single status can be offset through productivity gains Develop proposals as part of SS implementation plan and agree with CMT Identify services with large productivity gap compared to best in class Prioritise areas to be tackled as part of service plans		July '07 Sept '07 end '07 '08/'09	VJ VJ SHRMs SHRMs
4. Core skills audits and surveys	Better use of staff resources Improved staff motivation Improved service performance	Agree programme of audits, based on WDPs Implement programme		during '07 during '08	TC/ SHRMs
5. Workforce remodeling pilot exercises in priority areas	Improved value for money More flexible ways of working for staff More flexible services for customers	See 1. & 3. above		'08/'09	SHRMs

PRIORITY 5 Rapidly accelerating partnership and multi-disciplinary working

Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
1. Mainstream flexible, partnership and multi disciplinary working	Productive, flexible, motivated and adaptable workforce	Produce a new comprehensive flexible working policy		March 07	CG
		Develop and pilot new ways of working (incorporating new civic centre project)		June 07 onwards	CG
2. Develop guidance on partnership working for staff and members	Clarify purpose, approach and development of partnership working	Discussions with departments to identify key issues Discussions with partners Draft guidance			TC
3. Corporate and service-specific partnership and multidisciplinary skills and working arrangements identified and planned	Better integration of services More efficient use of resources	Identify areas for joint development		July '07	TC/ SHRMs
		Agree approach and programme with partners, including how resourced Implement programme		end '07 '08/'09	
4. Include joint development programmes with partners	Better integration of services More efficient use of resources	Identify areas for joint development		July '07	TC/ SHRMs
		Agree approach and programme with partners, including how resourced Implement programme		end '07 '08/'09	

PRIORITY 6 Improving diversity across the Council

Action	Output/Outcomes	Tasks	Progress	Deadline	Lead
1. Recruitment policy and procedures review	Mechanisms to develop and promote staff Improved management diversity	See priority 3 action 2			SR
2. Single status and equal pay action plan					
3. Targeted recruitment and development initiatives	Improved diversity Improved use of local labour	Develop new skills and career pathways Talent management and succession planning initiatives		Sept 07 April 08	MN
4. Cultural awareness programmes and surveys	Improved understanding of diversity agenda Better able to tailor initiatives				
5. Flexible learning and development opportunities	More effective targeting of programmes				