

Appendix 1 Contextual Information

1.1 Brent has comparatively high birth and fertility rates. In 2017, there were 5,208 live births in Brent, which equates to a 'crude' birth rate of 15.8 births per 1,000 people compared with 14.3 across London and 11.6 across England and Wales.

- a. On the 'general fertility rate' (GFR) measure, the rate of births in relation to the number of women aged 15-44 is 74.5 births per 1,000 compared with 63 in London and 61 in England and Wales. 76% of all births in Brent were to women born outside the UK, which is the highest in England and Wales. Brent women also tend to have more children on average than elsewhere, with 2.08 babies born across their lifetime compared with 1.7 in London and 1.76 across England and Wales.
- b. This contributes to Brent having a relatively younger population than the rest of London and the wider UK, with children and young people aged 0-19 years making up 27% of the population (approximately 91,000) of which more than 25,000 are aged 0-4 years.

1.2 Brent has growing numbers of children and young people with disabilities and additional needs with 3.1% of all school age children having an education, health and care plan (1,603) in 2018 (up from 3% in 2016 and 2017). This is the highest level since 2011 and slightly more than the London average (3%).

- a. The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2018-2021 identifies that growing numbers of children and young people with SEND is putting pressure on demand for specialist school places in the borough and on specialist provision more generally, and especially to ensure that this is available locally.
- b. The SEND Strategy draws attention to key areas of highest need that continue to grow. These are autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), social, emotional and mental health difficulties and complex and moderate learning difficulties. In the early years, the highest area of need is speech language and communication needs (SLCN), which often is later diagnosed as ASD.

1.3 Significant progress has been made in several priorities for children and young people's life chances. For example, the Borough Plan 2019-2023 describes:

- a. Children's Services were judged by Ofsted as "Good", with the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers judged as "Outstanding".
- b. 97.7% of Brent pupils attending schools which are rated good or outstanding and 94% of early years providers having ratings as good or outstanding too.
- c. Achievement in primary and secondary schools is higher than ever, with secondary school achievement amongst the best in the country. However, some pupils are at risk of lower attainment than others. This is the case, for

boys of Black Caribbean heritage, children looked after by Brent Council and those reaching the age where they leave care. These cohorts of young people are also over-represented amongst those not engaged in education, training or employment and the youth justice system.

1.4 The Brent Local Area Health Profile also shows that Brent ranks in the top 25% best performing boroughs in England for under 18 conceptions, breastfeeding initiation, smoking in pregnancy, attainment at age 8 and alcohol specific hospital stays for under 18¹.

1.5 At the same time, Brent has a lower level of economic activity and higher share of unemployment compared to the rest of London². These factors are more prevalent among women, who are much more likely than men to drop out of the labour market to stay at home to take care of the house and family. As a result, poverty, long-term unemployment and adult skills levels remain key challenges for Brent. Approximately 1 in 3 children live in poverty in 2018, a rate unchanged from 2017.³

- a. Working people tend to earn much less in Brent than other parts of London. In April 2018, an average full time employee earned £583.10 per week in Brent which is 81.8% of the London average of £713.
- b. Household income is in the bottom third for London, yet Brent lower quartile rents are the 4th highest compared to lower quartile salary in London⁴.
- c. UK Government reforms of the welfare system have exacerbated financial insecurity, rent arrears and individuals and families at risk of homelessness. The worst affected by the UK Government changes are young people, families with children, older people and disabled people. For example, by 2020, 84% of working age households in receipt of benefits that will lose over £50 per week have children, either as lone parents or couples. With the roll-out of Universal Credit, households in work, lone parents and couples without children⁵ are disproportionately affected⁶.
- d. The combined effects of above mean that housing stress is significant in Brent, with the borough having the 2nd highest rate of evictions in London.

1.6 The Health Profile also makes clear the very high prevalence of childhood obesity, with 27.7% of children aged 10-11 years being obese. This is amongst the worst 10% of all boroughs in England. There are also far lower rates of

¹ Public Health England *Local Area Health Profile Brent*

² See *Brent Responsible Growth Strategy (RGS): Economy 2018-2038*

³ <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/boroughs/brent-poverty-and-inequality-indicators/>

⁴ Ibid

⁶ Most households needing transitional protection are in work. Under Universal Credit (UC), work allowances are tougher to those in work than current tax credits. Moreover, UC introduces conditionality (i.e. sanctions including loss of income for extended periods) for recipients who are in work but earn below a certain level.

physically active adults in Brent.

1.7 Other key areas of worry affecting children and families in Brent include:

- a. While crime rates are lower in Brent than the London average, anti-social behaviour, the risk of harm and re-offending and violent crime, including gang and knife crime have increased. On these components of serious youth crime, Brent is 7th highest in London for 2018. Evidence also suggests Brent gangs are directly linked to Child Sexual Exploitation and County Lines⁷. There are estimates of 1,000+ known individuals in Brent engaged in gang criminality, with the Brent gangs cohort over 90% male, 80% black, and with an average age of 24 years⁸.
- b. Brent's Community Safety Strategy 2018-2021 sets out a grim local picture of the extent to which domestic abuse⁹ (DA) affects individuals- especially women who account for 3 in 4 victims- and families. Brent has the 5th highest number of reported DA and 3rd highest number of violent crimes DA in comparison to the most similar London boroughs. There were more than 144,000 incidents, of which 76,000 were notifiable offences. DA which involves injury equates to 31% of all notifiable DA offences. There are also increasing levels of sexual offences, including rape, reported in the borough.

About 40% of cases where there is a Child in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) Plan have domestic abuse as a factor in Brent¹⁰, which is more than any other factor. Similarly, Brent families that meet at least two of the six eligible headline problem areas of the national Troubled Families programme are significantly more likely affected by DA (33% in Brent compared with 6.1% in the general population of individuals aged 18-59).

- c. Brent ranks 11th in London for estimated number of children with diagnosable mental health conditions (4,572). Brent ranks 8th highest in London for children who self-harm (1,526)¹¹. The number of young people accessing specialist CAMHS has increased in Brent (30% more in 2017/18 compared to 2014/15) and the projection is that more CYP will need the service (2017/18 1,372; 2018/19 1,469; 2019/20 1,555; 2020/21 1,600).¹²

- 1.8 Against this background, there remains a necessity for further budget tightening by Brent Council (the Authority), in addition to £164m of savings made since 2010. By 2020, direct funding to the Authority from the UK Government will have been cut by 79%, at the same time as growing demand

⁷ Safer Brent, *Community Safety Strategy 2018-2021*

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ See DFE, *Characteristics of children in need: 2017 to 2018*, Table C3

¹¹ See North West London Clinical Commissioning Groups Children and Young People's Mental Health and Well-being Local Transformation Plan 2015-2018 – Oct 2018 Refresh - Brent Annexe 1 2018/19, *Brent CCG & The Authority local information and implementation plans 2018/19*

¹² Ibid

for services and a changing policy landscape. This includes:

- a. Local authorities focusing on targeting services to those at greatest risk of escalating problems, rather than universal services.
- b. Addressing the growing challenge of serious youth violence that can be linked to low educational outcomes, school exclusions and gang related activity, particularly acute in specific neighbourhoods. The most affected wards are Tokyngton, Wembley, Harlesden, Willesden Green, Kilburn, Preston and Stonebridge.
- c. Services becoming increasingly aware of the needs of vulnerable adolescents, those who are susceptible to becoming victims as well as perpetrators of crime and the requirement to support families to meet their needs.
- d. Learning from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres (APPG) 2016 inquiry into the future of children's centres. The APPG recommended building on the existing infrastructure of children's centres and extending their offer to include holistic, early intervention services to families i.e. parents and all children regardless of age (as well as retaining specific provision for very young children and their (prospective) parents).
- e. Prioritisation of whole family services, where a range of family needs can be met at one place. Taken together with the APPG recommendations this has implications for Brent children's centres which have always focused on children aged 0-4 years and their parents. This model is no longer sustainable.
- f. Findings from outcomes based review work in Brent which recommended more hub-based service delivery that acts as a one-stop support in addressing the needs of the whole family, further to significant consultation work with Brent residents through 2018.

This has been reinforced in recent work undertaken with Brent parents as part of an annual children's centre parent satisfaction and impact study (published February 2019). The study involving 1,751 Brent parents/carers with children and 0-4 years, found that 27% were motivated to access Brent children's centres to '*get information, advice and services in one place*'. Key areas for improvement recommended by parents/carers also include additional weekend and evening provision and more whole-family services.

- g. Commitments made to the Ministry of Communities Housing and Local Government (MCHLG), as part of Troubled Families service transformation, and within the Brent Children's Trust *Early Help Framework 2018-2020*. These are embed a substantially more whole-family approach across all service delivery.