

Brent Youth Strategy

2021 – 2023

DRAFT

Foreword

When I was growing up in Brent, the youth services on offer were a huge lifeline for me, and many thousands of other young people like me. Today, as a Cabinet Member I'm very honoured to have the opportunity to introduce a new Brent Youth Strategy to reinvigorate our services for the next generation.

This strategy belongs to the young people of Brent. At every stage it was designed to represent their voices. The ideas and opinions we heard underpin both the strategy and our plan for delivery. I would like to thank every young person who took part for their time, energy and commitment.

The Independent Brent Poverty Commission, which reported in 2020, was a hugely impressive and important piece of work. It laid bare the huge challenges many people – especially the young - face in our borough. I am determined that we will not shirk from this challenge and am pleased that this strategy starts to set out how the council will work together in tackling poverty, inequality and social exclusion to improve outcomes for local young people.

But the council cannot achieve all of this on our own. This is why we collaborated closely with partners, including the voluntary sector, across Brent. I know that, as we work to deliver on the commitments in this strategy, our partnerships will grow and develop still further.

Central to our vision is a long-term approach. I want this strategy to make a difference in our borough for many years, so, I am pleased it will provide a statutory framework that will support future funding bids and improve service co-ordination.

Brent is a young, diverse and vibrant borough. Its young people are conscientious, articulate and determined. They deserve the very best we can offer and I am confident this strategy will deliver just that.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mili".

Cllr Mili Patel

Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding,
Early Help and Social Care

Purpose

Youth provision plays a vital role in the lives of young people; helping them to develop relationships, reach their full potential and become active members of their communities.

For youth services, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure access to positive activities, including educational and recreational leisure-time activities, 'so far as reasonably practicable'. This qualifier means that there is significant variance in national and regional arrangements for youth provision, generally reflecting available resources.

In Brent, youth provision is successfully delivered by a wide range of skilled and passionate individuals, groups and organisations of all sizes. This includes many trusted and high-quality offers that engage and support young people in their communities and across the borough; delivering activities and improving wellbeing. These partners have strong links and collaborative relationships with many Brent services - including those that support vulnerable and disadvantaged young people - to help plan, coordinate and promote provision.

This strategy has been co-developed and co-produced by local young people to ensure their youth provision can best meet their collective needs and enable all of Brent's young people to thrive.

It has been produced in response to the recommendations of Brent's Independent Poverty Commission, aimed at helping reduce poverty, inequality and social exclusion across the borough.

Brent's Young People

Population¹	Special educational needs and / or disabilities²
There are around 28,400 young people aged 13-19 in Brent – this group makes up around 8% of the Brent population	2,805 young people aged 0-25 are supported through an EHCP (education, health and care plan)
Diversity - ethnicity³	Diversity - language⁴
Over three quarters of Brent pupils (77%) are from Black, Asian and Minority ethnic groups including 33% from Asian groups and 23% from Black ethnic groups	Over two thirds of Brent pupils (68%) have a first language other than English . In total, around 150 different languages are used by Brent pupils

¹ Greater London Authority, 2018-based projection for 2020, BPO variant

² Brent ECHP return to DFE, February 2021

³ Pupil Census, Brent, January 2020 (figures for Brent pupils who are also resident in Brent)

⁴ Pupil Census, Brent, January 2020 (figures for Brent pupils who are also resident in Brent)

Child Poverty⁵	School attainment⁶
<p>Around 22% of children in Brent live in poverty. This rises to 43% where housing costs are considered</p>	<p>Brent pupils have a 0.47 average Progress 8 score – around half a grade more progress in each of their eight subjects at secondary school than pupils nationally</p> <p>Brent pupils have an average 50.2 Attainment 8 score – above both the London and national averages</p> <p>On average, Brent pupils attain a grade C in each of their three A Level subjects – equal to both the London and national averages</p>
NEET⁷	Exclusions⁸
<p>The proportion of 16/17 year olds not in education, employment or training is 1.4%.</p> <p>For London the proportion is 1.8% and nationally it is 2.6%</p>	<p>0.14% of pupils are permanently excluded from Brent Secondary schools</p> <p>For England as a whole this is 0.20%</p>
Youth Offending⁹	In Care¹⁰
<p>Youth reoffending rates in Brent have been declining over recent years, but a small minority of young people are at risk of gang violence, sexual exploitation and substance misuse.</p>	<p>38 out of every 10,000 children in Brent are in care.</p> <p>For England as a whole this is 67 out of every 10,000 children.</p>

Approach

From its earliest stages, this strategy has been developed in partnership with local young people to ensure they have steered its focus and their collective voice is at its heart.

This has been achieved through a co-designed engagement and strategy development approach that began with targeted sessions with Brent Youth Parliament, Young Brent Foundation Young Ambassadors and Care in Action groups. These sessions gathered initial feedback and tested online engagement approaches to inform the design of the annual Children’s Commissioners Takeover Day.

⁵ Brent Poverty Commission, 2020

⁶ DFE, latest available figures for 2018/19

⁷ IYSS, serverlac, latest available figures for 2019

⁸ DFE, latest available figures for 2018/19

⁹ Youth Justice Board, data for period 2016-2018

¹⁰ Public Health England, Child Health Profiles, 2020.

At Takeover Day 2020, hosted virtually for the first time due to pandemic restrictions, 30 young people representing six local schools and colleges collaborated in developing a bespoke engagement approach aimed at encouraging their peers to share their views and insights. Through tailored group exercises they created, tested and refined their own engagement questions, and developed vision statements and **key messages** intended to resonate with other young people.

“Use your voice, create your vision, shape your future and build a better Brent”

“You don’t have to be loud to be heard, you just need to use your voice and share your words”

“It’s time for you to take charge and help make the future better for young people.”

“Times are changing, YOU need to be heard.”

The main product from Takeover Day was a short, co-produced survey with questions designed to generate responses that would directly shape the strategy’s vision, themes and goals. The survey was promoted via the young people who developed it, young leaders and key stakeholders including: schools and colleges, PRUs, statutory partners, voluntary and community sector networks and Brent services – all were tasked with encouraging and supporting responses from the young people they engage or work with to ensure extensive opportunities to contribute.

High-level theming and analysis of all responses were coordinated by a young person on Brent’s supported internship programme – a programme for young adults aged between 16 and 24 with special educational needs and disabilities. Working closely with council officers, these themes were refined and draft strategic goals developed.

The final stages of co-development included focussed sessions with YBF Young Ambassadors, Brent Youth Parliament and Brent River College - where the groups reviewed and discussed themed survey responses, providing detailed feedback and new insights for each area - and an aligned, thematic engagement session facilitated by Bang Edutainment.

A vivid and recurring voice throughout co-production of this strategy is that it must only be the start of young people’s involvement - they must continue to influence it through oversight of the delivery plan and opportunities for co-delivery. Many local young people have already invested their time and energy in developing this strategy and are committed to ensuring its successful implementation.

At a strategic level, development of the strategy has been overseen by the Brent Early Help and Prevention Group - a council-led group, chaired by the Statutory Director of Children’s Services, including lead officers for Children and Young People, Public Health, Community Safety and Employment and Skills services, alongside key representatives from partners including the Police, Health and the Voluntary and Community sector. It has been further

shaped through workshops and meetings with strategic partners and local youth sector leads, including drawing on earlier and ongoing work in this sphere.

Vision

Young peoples' vision for their ideal Brent is:

- a place of endless opportunities, where young people are empowered to express themselves and dream big;

This includes:

- the necessary resources and support for every young person to achieve their highest ambitions;
- spaces and places where young people can be together, have fun and feel like they belong;
- active, caring and united communities, where everyone has a voice and is heard;
- a place of safety, happiness and peace;
- a clean and eco-friendly environment that is treated with respect by all;

Strategic context

In the backdrop of the global pandemic, the council has refined and refreshed its strategic focus from 2021 to take forward delivery of the five priorities set out in **Building a Better Brent**, the borough plan for 2019-2023. **Providing Youth Opportunities** is an area of enhanced focus, supporting the **Every Opportunity to Succeed** priority, with the desired outcome of increasing opportunities for children and young people to succeed. The implementation of this youth strategy will directly contribute towards achieving this outcome.

In early 2020, over six months, **Brent's Independent Poverty Commission** explored the ways in which the council could do more to reduce poverty, inequality and social exclusion amongst local people. This work spanned the dawning of the Covid-19 crisis and the first national lockdown. It recognised the disproportionate toll the pandemic was already taking on young people; stressing the importance of ensuring young people of all backgrounds can access activities, support and opportunities as crucial in tackling these issues. The Commission recommended development of this statutory-led youth strategy to help focus and coordinate efforts in this area.

Whilst the landscape for the introduction of this strategy is unprecedentedly challenging, it has not been developed from a standing-start. The borough is fortunate to benefit from an engaged youth sector, including a wide range of groups and organisations galvanised by the **Young Brent Foundation (YBF)** – a key Brent partner which, since its formation in 2016, has

been increasingly successful in supporting local youth-focused VCS, not-for-profit and social enterprises to build capacity and support improved outcomes for local young people.

Working in close partnership with community organisations and representatives is an area of strength for Brent, including ongoing collaboration to deliver the **Brent Black Community Action Plan (BCAP)**, which was jointly developed in response to the inequalities highlighted by the **Black Lives Matter** movement. A primary aim of the BCAP is to improve outcomes for local young people in the black community; and many of the BCAP actions, which include enabling young people to explore and express their aspirations and make them aware of opportunities available to them, naturally dovetail with and support the goals of this youth strategy.

Brent's alternative provision and pupil referral units are increasingly engaging with a broader offer to provide an evolving wrap-around youth provision. The Roundwood Alternative Provision School, which opened in early 2021, working with the voluntary and community sector, provides an accessible outside-of-school-hours offer and is an example of how Brent has adapted its resources to meet changing needs. Ongoing work in exploring opportunities to develop a Youth Zone in Brent (in partnership with OnSide) further demonstrates the scale of local ambitions for building a better Brent for young people.

Brent Council has adopted a **contextual safeguarding** approach led at a senior level in the Council. Our contextual safeguarding approach recognises that we need to look beyond the family to keep young people safe. We know that risks exist to young people through peer group associations and within neighbourhoods, schools and colleges and public spaces where young people develop relationships and spend their leisure time. Young people know best where these risks exist and we are committed to listening to them and working with them to make Brent a place of safety, happiness and peace.

This strategy aligns with and was developed in parallel to the forthcoming Multi-Agency Early Help Strategy and the Brent SEND Strategy. The voices of young people included throughout this document include those who contributed to development of the Brent SEND strategy.

Themes and Goals

This strategy was developed with local young people during the global pandemic. Whilst the shadow of the pandemic inevitably influenced conversations, the primary focus of young people was on driving positive change to ensure a better future.

“We must not become victims of the pandemic – we must come out the end of it stronger than before.”

The strategy has been structured around eight key themes that emerged from the engagement process. These themes and their strategic goals overlap with and reinforce each other in achieving the young people's vision for their ideal Brent.

The themes and goals are validated throughout this document in the 'young people told us' sections, which are a synthesis of the strongest views and insights gathered through engagement with young people.

Theme 1 – Engagement and voice

Brent has a number of established youth engagement forums including Brent Youth Parliament, Care in Action, Young Brent Foundation (YBF), Blueprint Collective, Young People Thrive, school councils and the SENDIASS youth forum; where young people play active roles in influencing decision making and tackling the issues that matter to them.

The voluntary nature of youth engagement requires innovative approaches to increase participation and amplify voices that may otherwise not be heard. Recent projects led by YBF and local youth sector partners have reinforced the crucial role of detached and outreach work in different communities to connect with more young people and understand their needs and aspirations.

“Engagement is well and good, but engagement needs to come with empowerment...”

“I'd feed into my community if it was easier to do...”

“In a year's time we could be the ones doing the chats and being given the platforms...”

“I enjoy talking to my friends. And my Disability Sports club.”

Young people told us...

- We must ensure that all engagement comes with empowerment, including opportunities for increased responsibility and equipping young people with the tools to do more things autonomously in and for their communities.
- Familiar faces, including other young people, breeds trust and understanding that can unlock richer insights. These faces should be empowered to lead engagement across communities and develop relevant skills including public speaking, hosting talks, active listening and facilitating workshops.
- Routes in to and promotion of engagement should clearly demonstrate the value of young people's time, including how their views will be translated into action and how

they as individuals will tangibly benefit – there needs to be relevant and appealing answers to “why should I give you my time?”

- Incentives can take many forms but should consider access to resources, power and support to implement things themselves, opportunities for peer to peer collaboration and holding decision-makers to account.
- Youth engagement needs a greater and more effective social media presence and there are many untapped opportunities to explore through digital engagement. The landscape for discussion is changing and online communities have become increasingly important. Young people are rapidly adopting new platforms and engagement approaches need to reflect this to ensure all young people can share their voices through their preferred channels.
- Barriers and resistance to engagement are wide ranging and include lack of trust, digital poverty, consultation fatigue and perceptions that some forums may require a high level of understanding (and are therefore intimidating). These need to be addressed.

Theme 2 – Activities

Recreational, cultural and sporting activities and events can be enriching and rewarding experiences. High quality, inclusive and diverse offers that appeal to young people of all backgrounds are essential in enabling them to lead happy and healthy lives. The role of the council in coordinating youth sector partner offers, including through supporting funding bids, is key in ensuring the provision best meets local priorities.

The pandemic saw many organisations diversify and flex their offers to continue connecting with young people, including remotely. It is anticipated that the positive attributes and innovations from this step-change can help enhance future programmes.

“If you’re putting something in then make sure it lasts...”

“We need things to look forward to...”

“Plenty of active clubs that everyone can enjoy...”

“I want to meet my friends. I want to go out without my family. There is nothing to do...”

Young people told us...

- The stability and dependability of activities is key to maintaining trust and ongoing participation. Being actively involved in something with peers and establishing a sense

of belonging is extremely valuable, but trust can quickly evaporate if clubs and programmes are perceived to end abruptly without clear communication or justification.

- There is a concern amongst young people that, during the pandemic, they and their peers lost an entire year of in-person interactions and the social and personal development they naturally enable. This has served as a critical reminder of the importance of in-person group activities and their value in developing relational abilities.
- Young people are keen to have new experiences and try different things. Diverse, youth-designed programmes, including regular taster sessions, would help reach a wider range of young people and encourage them to engage with youth activities, including sports, music and performing and visual arts.
- Young people want to have a say and more control over what activity programmes are available to them, but their preferences should be collected in a streamlined and integrated way. This includes simple methods for them to share their opinions, insights and stories, and for these to be collated to inform intelligence-led programmes that meet different needs and aspirations.
- There are limitless opportunities to capitalise on pandemic-driven digital and hybrid innovations. This should include more modern activities, including e-sports and gaming, that enable wider access and new ways of engaging young people. The virtual Nike London Youth Games, which included young people setting each other physical challenges through videos that they created, was a well-received example of what is possible.
- Events and activities that bring young people together help to remove barriers and improve cohesion. There is significant appetite for a young people-led post-lockdown event / festival that could help young people both reflect on their experiences of the pandemic and look to the future, including making new connections, getting involved in new things and having fun.

Theme 3 - Skills and Opportunities

The skills needed to support wellbeing, confidence and personal development are fundamental in equipping young people to succeed. This includes opportunities for developing life skills and readiness for further education and employment.

Brent Council and partners currently offer a diverse range of support in this area including Brent Works, Connexions/Prospects, the Moving on Up programme, Tech Camps, Supported Internships, the Skills Summit and the annual What's Next event. These types of

offers and more will be essential in mitigating the impact of the pandemic on young people achieving their ambitions.

“There's such a broad range of jobs out there, but even asking us what we want to do is offensive, as we have no way of knowing what exists and what would be right for us...”

“I feel like I need a mentor for some things but I could be a mentor for others...”

“Most youth have ideas on what they want to do but need support to execute it...”

“I would like to learn how to drive, go to college and find a job...”

Young people told us...

- Raising awareness of all types of futures and pathways is key. Young people recognise that success takes many forms, and not everyone will be a sports star or a musician, but every young person can be successful with the right information and opportunities. This includes inspiring young people of all backgrounds to understand the full scope of the life choices and careers available to them, including examples of successful and relatable role models in these fields and the journeys they took to get there.
- There is an abundance of interest and genuine excitement for entrepreneurial opportunities. Approaches for harnessing this enthusiasm - from enabling the first steps, through to support in refining and developing business ideas, testing elevator pitches, teaming up with partners and accessing funding - can capture the imagination of young people seeking greater control of their destiny.
- There is a gap in opportunities for many young people to develop the life skills needed to be ready for the transition from secondary school to further education, work and independence. This includes significant un-met demand for activities that help develop skills and knowledge around money management, cooking, legal basics and statutory entitlements.
- Mentors and role models can be key enablers for developing life skills. This could be supported by developing peer to peer mentoring opportunities and better enabling skills sharing between young people.
- Volunteering and other experience and reference-supporting opportunities can be very hard to find, and there is a perception that most volunteering positions are targeted at adults. Tailored approaches for connecting more young people with suitable opportunities in these areas are needed.

Theme 4 – Places and facilities

The places where young people spend their time are vitally important for their development and wellbeing. The right places and facilities, inclusive to all - including SEND friendly spaces, can enable young people to be themselves, develop positive relationships and connect with support if needed.

Brent has a varied range of buildings, parks and community assets that young people access in their leisure-time. There is also potential for schools and further education sites to play enhanced roles as venues for more out-of-hours activities. Emerging opportunities to better tailor places and facilities for young people include new arrangements at the Roundwood Centre, the Family Wellbeing Centres network and BCAP ambitions for developing community spaces; as well as increasingly important virtual places.

"I'd like somewhere where I could chill with other young people and just have normal conversations..."

"Introduce more youth centres so that young people aren't always out on the streets..."

"More places to play games with my friends..."

"I want to have fun. I want to meet my friends. I don't want my parents to be there..."

Young people told us...

- There is extremely high demand for more local, youth-dedicated spaces where young people can meet, relax and socialise with other young people and feel like they belong.
- Youth-dedicated spaces must help to connect young people with activities, support and opportunities. They should support outreach and help expand horizons by acting as gateways to diverse offers with wide appeal.
- There should be more spaces that enable young people to feel part of and connect with their local communities, including a sense of stake and ownership.
- Parks and sporting facilities should be more easily accessible (taking into account booking arrangements and cost barriers), and include more young-person-specific design features and equipment. The small things matter – for example, basketball hoops need to have nets or chains – and can help show that spaces are well looked after and should be treated with respect.
- Youth spaces should include robust digital connectivity and modern technology. This includes free Wi-Fi to help mitigate digital poverty, equipment to enable virtual and hybrid activities (such as workshops and gaming challenges), and support to create and collaborate in producing art, music and media content.

Theme 5 – Wellbeing and mental health

The 2021 Princes Trust National Youth index outlined the toll the pandemic has taken on young people's wellbeing and mental health, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Locally this impact has been highlighted by the Brent Poverty Commission, including related issues of food and fuel poverty, overcrowding and familial challenges.

The full impact of the pandemic will not be understood for a generation and, as new evidence emerges, innovative responses will need to be continuously developed. One clear legacy of the pandemic to date is the increased profile of young people's wellbeing and mental health and how it must be better supported.

“Making sure they feel comfortable and free to express how they feel...”

“I've used a mental health service but there was no youth element to it - it was done via an older woman who I don't think understood me...”

“The greatest support that youth can offer to each other is communication...”

Young people told us...

- The impact of multiple lockdowns, where young people have been at risk of isolation and increased vulnerabilities, is at the forefront of their concerns for themselves and their peers.
- We need to increase awareness of what trusted, wellbeing-specific information and support is available for young people outside of schools and colleges. This should include easy access to someone trusted they can talk to – someone who will listen without judging. This should be accessible in safe spaces, both in-person and virtually.
- The pandemic has highlighted how neglected young people's wellbeing and mental health was previously. They are pleased that it now has a higher profile and want the conversations and action to continue.
- Easy access to in-person groups and activities is more important than ever in offering a break from challenging home lives and helping to identify if a young person needs support. For many young people their friends are their family, and they need to be able to turn to them when in need.
- Young people are passionate about being empowered to work together in tackling pre-existing and pandemic-driven issues that intensify their wellbeing and mental health pressures. This includes racism, discrimination, inequalities, bullying, social media, trauma and bereavement.

- Young people are more likely to approach their peers than adults when facing serious challenges. This includes confiding in peers about not eating, having suicidal thoughts, self-harming and challenging home lives. This means young people should be better equipped to support each other – they want to be able to help but need more detailed understanding and training of how they can help at a peer level.
- There is significant appetite for a young people-led post-lockdown event that could help them reflect on their experiences of the pandemic and let them express their views in a fun way. This could include multi-media ‘time-capsule’ elements to document and share different perspectives.

Theme 6 - Safety

Being and feeling safe are central pillars in supporting the development of young people and enabling healthy behaviours and lives.

Insights from the young person-designed ‘**Building a safer Brent for young people**’ and joint, pan-London ‘**Challenging the narrative**’ events showed how safety themes underpin all aspects of young people’s day to day experiences - demonstrating the value of a public health approach to improving safety.

“You might not necessarily be in a gang or be related to a gang member, but it is a real thing when people from an area know that you’re not from there...”

“Positive relationships lead to positive outcomes....”

“For me it’s about how can I understand the community and help the community...”

“I don’t like that in my area there are paths which are dangerous at night and I cannot go out alone...”

Young people told us...

- Young people want more control and influence around their narrative and place in society. This needs to be a positive narrative that focusses on their value and does not treat them with suspicion or position them as a problem.
- There are mixed views around the police and young people’s relationship with them. Whilst many young people see more police as an obvious solution for improving safety this is not a unanimous view - many others point to personal or peer experiences, including stop and search, that have eroded their trust. There is consensus that more needs to be done to improve this dynamic, including increased opportunities for

collaboration and training, as well as more informal interactions outside of the traditional power-balance. This should include approaches that enable behavioural reflections for all participants, helping to bridge the gap and increase understanding and awareness of different perspectives.

- The fallout from the pandemic includes increased levels of vulnerabilities for many young people, which can make them more susceptible to risky behaviours such as engaging in gang-related activity and other harmful practices. Outreach to listen to, understand and connect these young people with positive activities, support and opportunities is essential.
- Young people are passionate about improving community cohesion and raised many areas to consider. These include improving local engagement and building new networks between young people from different neighbourhoods, paid and voluntary community opportunities that provide a sense of purpose and belonging, giving voice and taking action in response to specific local concerns (police presence, CCTV, street lighting etc.) and developing community safe spaces where local people can come together and young people can access and work with relatable mentors.
- Following lockdown and periods of isolation, the digital wellbeing and safety of young people are increasingly important. This includes online bullying and abuse, digital-addiction and cyber security. Educating and equipping young people with the skills to better support themselves and each other in these areas should be a priority, and these steps should be embedded in the process of introducing new digital innovations.

Theme 7 - Access and Awareness

Local authorities have a statutory duty to publicise information about the local youth offer. In Brent this is achieved through various channels including Brent Youth Zone - an online platform, co-designed by local young people, where youth sector partners can submit their activities, opportunities, groups, clubs and events for young people to view in a single location.

Extending the reach of youth provision and connecting with young people of all backgrounds is a constantly evolving challenge. This requires continuous innovation, including tailored outreach approaches, to increase awareness and understand and overcome barriers to access.

"There's things I'd like to try but I'm not sure where to go..."

"Get it on my social media feeds..."

"It can't be assumed that just having the right activities or spaces will mean young people will come..."

“I want to try new activities and go to more places but not sure where...”

Young people told us...

- There’s a broad range of provision across the borough but it needs to be better marketed. More positive, youth-relevant activity is happening than is listed in any one place, and different groups of young people are aware of different local offers but not others.
- Student and youth leaders should be more involved in promoting youth provision – they can be the bridge for getting other young people connected. This can include utilising groups and virtual networks that young people are already engaging with to organically create awareness. We should better empower young leaders to do this, giving them the information, resources and support they need.
- Following the pandemic, there need to be increasingly active efforts to reach disengaged young people, as these are often the most vulnerable. Trusted outreach workers and community mentors with the skills and tools to overcome barriers are more important than ever in supporting access to provision.
- Social media and influencers should play a larger role in raising awareness and connecting more young people with provision. Young people spend much of their time on their phones, so promotion needs to be tailored to this device and reach them via their social media feeds. This includes using established platforms young people are already engaged with (e.g. Eventbrite) to increase range.
- Digital poverty is a serious issue. Not all young people have the devices and connectivity needed to support access and awareness of youth provision. Fully addressing this barrier is an essential step in tackling inequalities and could be an incentive for encouraging more young people of different backgrounds to become more engaged.
- To capitalise on opportunities to support more young people virtually, or to just stay connected to those they’d previously only see in-person, the local youth sector also needs robust digital capacity – with multiple other options available (e.g. Netflix, YouTube), frustrating lost connections and broken conversations could see previously engaged young people disengage.
- Affordability is a common access barrier, especially for sporting activities and facilities. Provision should be free wherever possible and promotional approaches should include incentives that help mitigate costs and reward participation.
- Inspiration works. Seeing and hearing about examples of success and positive outcomes for relatable people can have a huge impact. It often takes just one person or one story to get through and open a young person’s mind to trying something new, looking at things differently, or taking the first step to connecting with support.

Theme 8 – The environment

Young people deserve a clean and sustainable environment as a fundamental right. When voicing their vision for an ideal Brent, many local young people intrinsically linked the green agenda with their youth provision priorities.

In 2019 Brent Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and began developing a ten year strategy including how everyone who lives, works and studies in Brent can contribute towards tackling the climate crisis. Young people's energy in this area will be essential for successfully delivering the Climate Emergency strategy, which will include aligning relevant activity with the Brent Youth Strategy.

“We need a nice healthy environment and community...”

“Full of opportunities, free from pollution...”

“It feels disorganised with decisions made for the environment...”

“I want to help out at the Recycling Centre near my house but I am too young...”

Young people told us...

- Linking youth provision with environmental themes is an opportunity to increase engagement and participation in key areas. This ranges from developing practical skills for sustainable employment in the green economy through to programmes of recreational activities that connect young people with nature and support related wellbeing outcomes.
- Environment themed, youth-focussed volunteering and engagement opportunities could be a catalyst for getting more young people actively involved in their communities. This should include addressing challenges in the round, not just the symptoms (e.g. litter), and enabling young people to develop an increased stake in their local areas.
- There should be more opportunities for young people to participate in and lead campaigns that help to develop literacy around environmental issues, educate and demonstrably influence the wider picture. Examples of viral campaigns that encourage participants to take action themselves and nominate others to do the same (e.g. run 5k, donate £5, nominate 5 friends) were cited as approaches that could have far reaching and impactful application in this area.

Strategic goals

The following strategic goals each span and support multiple themes and priorities:

1. Create more opportunities and increase participation of young people from all backgrounds to become actively engaged and empowered members of their communities.
2. Develop increasingly sustainable, inclusive, diverse, and engaging recreational opportunities that bring young people together and respond to evolving priorities.
3. Inspire and enable all young people to grasp opportunities and achieve their ambitions.
4. Support the development of modern and accessible youth-dedicated spaces.
5. Promote and embed wellbeing and mental health priorities, including access to support, within the local youth provision.
6. Enable positive relationships and healthy behaviours to ensure all young people feel safe in their communities.
7. Ensure all young people are aware of and are able to access local youth provision.
8. Harness young people's passion for a green and sustainable environment.

Delivery plan activities to achieve these goals should respond to and address what **'young people told us...'** throughout co-development of this strategy.

Governance

A group of appropriate Brent and partner agency leads will be established to help drive, coordinate and ensure successful implementation of this strategy and delivery plan. This group will also be responsible for empowering young people from all backgrounds to become actively engaged with the strategy, including co-design and co-delivery opportunities.

Strategic oversight and accountability for the strategy sits with the Brent Early Help and Prevention Group - a council-led group, chaired by the Statutory Director of Children's Services, including lead officers for Children and Young People, Public Health, Community Safety and Employment and Skills services, alongside key representatives from partners including the Police, Health and the Voluntary and Community sector.