

Brent Workforce Strategy – 2022-25

Introduction

Brent is one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in the UK. The council is a vibrant and dynamic organisation with a workforce that reflects the diversity of its community. The diversity of the borough and the cohesion between its different communities are major factors in Brent's characteristic vitality and energy. In Brent, 76% of the working age population (16-64) are economically active; 70% are employed. As an employer, we have an indisputable bearing on the economic development of the borough and an essential responsibility as a role model for other local employers. We are therefore pleased to introduce our workforce strategy.

Over the last few years the council has had to face unprecedented financial challenge and change. The pandemic has presented significant additional challenges and we are proud of the way our staff have adapted and responded during this difficult time. As we come out of the pandemic we need to respond to increased pressure on the services we offer both as a result of pent up demand and an increase in demand for other services such as mental health and employment support so that our residents are best placed to return to the lives they had before the pandemic. Brent has a clear vision to make the borough a great place to live and work even whilst this challenge continues; a place where people feel that they have opportunities to change their lives for the better even in the context of the most pressing financial challenges experienced in public services for decades.

A skilled and engaged workforce is crucial to achieving our vision. We are proud of our staff; we recognise the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for our borough and it is only through our staff that these will be met. Our workforce strategy sets out our priorities for the next three years to enable and support our workforce in achieving our goals for the borough building on the commitment and flexibility demonstrated through the pandemic.

Our workforce

Having a high performing workforce that provides the best services it can which can truly understand and meet the needs of all our diverse communities is critical to the achievement of our goals for the borough. We strive to continue to be a fully accessible and inclusive organisation, to encourage the broad spectrum of skills, experiences and perspectives of our communities and our staff.

We aim to recruit, retain and reward a diverse, highly skilled, flexible and motivated workforce that leads the way in encouraging diversity to flourish in Brent.

Overall the diversity of workforce is closely aligned with the diversity of the communities we serve but we want to ensure this is the same at all levels of the organisation. We have made good progress over recent years but know we have more to do and will continue to build on existing practices and initiatives and identify new ones in pursuit of this aim. These initiatives will be informed through engagement with relevant staffing groups and our decisions will be evidence-based to ensure we

prioritise and focus our attention on those things that need to change that will really make a difference.

Our workforce by equality group

	2018	2019	2020	2021
No employees	2,119	2,138	2,365	2,371
Average age	44	44	44	45
Disability	10%	9%	9%	8%
Ethnicity - BAME	66%	65%	67%	66%
Gender - Female	64%	64%	64%	63%

Our priorities

We have identified 4 key workforce priorities which will guide both what we do and how we will do it in pursuit of achieving our goals for the borough.

This strategy document sets out the outcomes we will strive to achieve and the approach we will take to get there. This will be underpinned by a delivery plan that will set out in more detail what we will do and when we will do it by which will be regularly reviewed and updated throughout the period covered by this strategy.

Priority 1 – Workforce planning

- We will work closely with and support services to identify current and future workforce requirements
- We will keep abreast of national, local and council developments to inform those requirements
- We will develop and implement plans to meet these requirements keeping them under regular review
- We will integrate succession planning into day-to-day management activity and ensure succession plans are in place for critical roles
- We will review and adapt our approach to recruitment and selection to ensure we attract the people with the right attributes to best serve our communities
- We will identify and tap into diverse talent pools both within and outside of the Council

Priority 2 – Workforce insight and experience

- We will use our employees' experiences and views from pre-hire to retire so we can maximise all interactions to create a deep sense of belonging and wellbeing
- We will establish and draw upon multiple sources of data and information to provide intelligence
- We will build on our employee engagement action planning to ensure we are continuously improving as an employer

- We want everyone in our workforce to feel they can be who they are and feel confident in a supportive environment where they are able to contribute their ideas and opinions and work in partnership with others.
- We will provide managers with real time data to enable them to be pro-active in spotting emerging issues and deal with them effectively
- We will embrace the value of diversity through ideas, and ways of working that people from different backgrounds, experience and identity bring to the organisation
- We will continue to help staff access the benefits and well-being support available to them.
- We will make the council an employer of choice for a great diversity of people and prioritise achieving diversity at all levels in our workforce

Priority 3 – Workforce growth and development

- We will provide pathways into employment and opportunities to support career development and progression using innovative delivery mechanisms
- We will integrate learning and development into key people processes to embed a culture of learning and high performance
- We will ensure learning is accessible to all and available through a range of formal and informal mechanisms to recognise individual learning styles
- We will create a strong leadership pipeline, enabling the organisation to identify potential leaders early on and provide the right opportunities for development
- We will develop a set of management standards for managing staff, resources and budgets
- We will enable and require managers to be adept at supporting staff with development planning whilst at the same time encouraging staff to take personal responsibility for their own performance and development

Priority 4 – Workforce ways of working

- We will review our performance processes to ensure they focus on outcomes and are fit for purpose for a smaller more agile workforce
- We will maximise the use of technology and systems to make us more efficient and self-sufficient
- We will focus on activities that add value to make sure we make effective and efficient use of our resources
- We will embed flexible working to enable staff to achieve a healthy work-life balance whilst at the same ensuring services are delivered at a time and in a way that meets the needs of our customers
- We will focus our development activities on increasing leadership capability and capacity to lead staff through change whilst creating a culture of collaboration to help us create a more resilient workforce

Outcomes

Having a skilled and engaged workforce is crucial to achieving our vision. Therefore the priorities we have determined for our workforce are with the aim of achievement of the overall outcome of having and maintaining a skilled and engaged workforce.

We have identified a number of specific outcomes which we believe will contribute both collectively and individually to achievement of the overall outcome. These are:

- A greater proportion of filled positions
- Reduced reliance on agency workers and external providers
- Less reliance on external recruitment to fill key roles
- Increased staff retention
- Increased staff participation, engagement and satisfaction
- Increased flexibility to move staff to fill key skill gaps
- A workforce that is representative of the communities we serve; one which can truly understand and meet the needs of all our diverse communities

Specific actions and initiatives that will contribute to achieving the above outcomes will be outlined in a delivery plan for each year and will sit alongside the strategy. This will include targets for the impending year and an outline of what is planned for each of the subsequent years of the strategy.

Progress reviews

Achievement of the outcomes and the specific actions and initiatives for each priority will be kept under constant review to ensure they are delivering the outcomes identified.

Progress against the outcomes and the delivery plan, will be reviewed at least annually. It is anticipated that the overall outcome of a skilled and engaged workforce is relevant to achieving the Council's current and future vision, however the first of these reviews will be carried out once the Borough Plan for 2023-25 has been agreed by Cabinet.

Any changes to the priorities and specific actions and initiatives, including the identification of any new ones, will be underpinned by evidence based decision making.

It is proposed that the Council Management Team receive reports on progress in achieving the outcomes of the new Workforce Strategy twice a year, once before the start of the year to consider and agree the updated action plan for the remainder of the period of the strategy and once during each year to review progress on that year's

actions. The actions for each year will be incorporated as appropriate into HR's annual service plan and monitored at HR Management Team meetings.