

## Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment: Budget Proposals 2025/26

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this equality assessment is to provide an analysis of the likely impact of the council's budget savings proposals on residents and community groups with 'protected characteristics' as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The nine protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership<sup>1</sup>, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity. Section 149, Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010 requires the council in the exercise of its functions to have regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the act;
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Whilst not a statutory requirement, it is our policy that where relevant an equality analysis should also cover socio-economic equality implications.

The council is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. It seeks to ensure that all residents, employees and stakeholders are treated fairly and receive appropriate, accessible services and fair and equal opportunities. This commitment requires that equality considerations play a key role in our decision-making processes; and in understanding the effect of our policies and practices.

#### **Approach to considering equalities**

The budget savings proposals have all been subject to an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) screening, which helps to establish their relevance to the council's equalities duties and determine whether a full EIA is required. The screening assesses the potential or likely impact on service users and employees with protected characteristics. EIAs are living documents and if - as projects/proposals develop and further evidence of impacts becomes available – any unforeseen impacts emerge, they should be reviewed. Relevant leads for the

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<sup>1</sup> Bullet point 2 and 3 does not apply to marriage and civil partnerships.

budget savings proposals requiring an EIA attended a bespoke EIA training prior to completing their analysis, covering the legislation underpinning the document, and the practicalities of completing it.

This document highlights the equality impacts for the 2025-26 budget proposals, and Full Equality Impact Analyses are attached.

Six proposals have been identified as requiring a full EIA. The equality impacts concerned with these proposals are summarised in this report. The council must carefully consider and have due regard to the impact of its savings proposals on the PSED; and take a reasonable and proportionate view regarding the overall impact and seek to mitigate impacts where possible.

### **Overall Assessment**

No direct discrimination has been identified as a result of the budget proposals. A small proportion of the savings proposals may have a negative impact on equality of opportunity and may have a negative impact on opportunities to promote good relations, however measures have been identified to offset this.

These impacts will be kept under review. The proposed budget saving proposals are considered reasonable and have shown due regard to the PSED.

## **2 DEMOGRAPHY OVERVIEW**

Key facts about Brent's demographic profile are taken from the data sources [Population change in Brent](#) and the [Equality profile of Brent](#). They show the make-up of the borough, help us to identify potential impacts; and identify the increasing pressures and demand for council services.

- Brent is home to around 344,500 residents and is the fifth largest borough in London.
- The borough has a population density of 7,969 people per square kilometre – the 14th highest density in England, and the highest in Outer London.
- Brent has high levels of population mobility: During 2022-23, 44,300 people moved into the borough and 43,400 residents moved out. This equates to a population turnover rate of 255 per 1000 population, the 18th highest rate in England, and the highest across Outer

London Boroughs. This high level of mobility contributes to shifting demographics, with Indian and Romanian migrant populations increasing by 23% and 187% respectively since 2011.

- The population of Brent grew by 6.2% over the period 2013-2023, similar to the rise across London and England (6.0% and 7.0%). Over the last ten years, Brent's population growth has been driven primarily by natural change (more births than deaths) as opposed to net migration. The birth rate has fallen over the year but remains well above the national average.
- The population is projected to grow between 17% to 27% over the period 2023-2041, with the 'central' scenario predicting that the population will grow by around 24%, with the population expected to reach around 431,000 by 2041. If realised, this would lead to an additional 82,500 residents by 2041 – around 4,600 additional residents per year
- In line with national trends, the population is ageing: by 2041, the number of Brent residents aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 85% – an additional 34,900 older residents by 2041. The child population is also expected to grow, albeit more slowly, by 12% by 2041 (+8,600 children).
- Population growth is expected to be concentrated in the areas where significant housing development is planned. The three wards likely to see the biggest population growth are Alperton, Wembley Park and Roundwood. Considered together, these three wards are projected to accommodate an additional 43,700 residents by 2041 (53% of the total growth across Brent)

A summary of the key protected characteristics in Brent are as follows:

### **Age**

- In common with other London Boroughs, Brent has a relatively young population: the median age of the population is 35.5, similar to London (35.9), but five years lower than the national trend (40.4). Compared with England, Brent has proportionately more young adults and fewer over 50s. One in four Brent residents are aged 20-34 compared with around one in five nationally (25% vs. 19%), while 29% of the borough population is aged 50 or over compared with 38% nationally.

### **Disability**

- Around one in seven Brent residents have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day-activities in some way. The prevalence of disability rises sharply with age: more than half of all residents aged 65 and over had a long-term health problem or

disability.

### **Gender reassignment**

- The 2021 census found that approximately 0.5% of the population in England and Wales are identified as transgender. In Brent, this would equate to roughly 1,700 people.

### **Marriage and civil partnership**

- Of Brent residents aged 16 years and over, 43.5% said they had never been married or in a civil partnership in 2021, up from 42.1% in 2011. The increase in the percentage of people who had never been married or in a civil partnership was higher across London (2.1%) than in Brent (1.4%). These figures include same-sex marriages and opposite sex civil partnerships.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

- Brent has higher fertility rates than nationally. During 2022, there were 4,431 births in Brent – which equates to a general fertility rate of 55.8 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, higher than the rate across England (51.9) and London (50.5).
- In common with other areas, the birth rate has been falling in recent years. In Brent, the general fertility rate dropped from 66.0 in 2013 down to 55.8 in 2022. Similar trends are evident across London and nationally.

### **Race**

- Brent has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the country. The majority of residents are from ethnic minority groups: 65% are from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups (the 2nd highest rate in England & Wales, after Newham at 69%), and 19% are from White minority groups. Brent and Newham have the smallest White British populations nationally (15%).

### **Religion or belief**

- Brent residents are more likely to have a religion than those elsewhere: overall, 80% of residents had a religion compared with 57% nationally – the 4th highest rate in England & Wales.
- Brent's largest religious group is Christian (39%), though the borough has a smaller Christian population than nationally (46%). Around one in five residents are Muslim (21%), well above both the London and national averages, and the 15th highest rate nationally, and around 16% of residents are Hindu - the 3rd highest rate in England & Wales. Other smaller, but significant, religious groups in Brent include, Jewish (1.1%); Buddhist (0.9%); Jain (0.7%) and Sikh (0.5%) populations.

## Sex

- The Brent population is 49% male and 51% female. Females comprise just over half (51%) of the population but make up a higher proportion of the elderly population: 59% of those aged 80 and over are female and this rises to two thirds for the over 90s (67%). The sex ratio in Brent is similar to that across London and England & Wales (both 51% female).

## Sexual orientation

- In the 2021 census, 96.4% of adults who answered the sexual orientation question identified as straight or heterosexual, and 3.6% identified as LGB+. This is below the London average (4.3%) but above the national rate (3.3%).

## 3 IMPACT OF SAVING PROPOSALS

### Summary 25/26 budget proposals

Although initial equality screenings have been undertaken to ascertain impact in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), some of the proposals are in their formative stages and are still to be developed or are subject to consultations. Consequently, as the proposals are developed, further equality analysis will be undertaken to assess the PSED. Where a full equality impact assessment has been carried out, this is noted next to the proposal.

### The proposals are:

*CHW01 25-26 Increasing reablement to prevent future cost:* Aims to expand reablement services by increasing specialist staff to support mental health and learning disabilities clients and handling demand growth via Quality Assurance Monitoring. This "spend-to-save" initiative could be initially funded by the Market Sustainability Improvement Fund, adding 2-3 posts. The plan is modelled on extending the £400k savings achieved in 2023/24.

*CHW02 25-26 Increase Shared Lives capacity to provide as an alternative to respite in residential care:* Increases the number of Shared Lives carers to provide respite for individuals with learning disabilities. By expanding the Shared Lives programme, we can allocate more

learning disabilities customers to these carers, thereby reducing reliance on more costly residential respite placements and creating significant budget savings. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

*CHW03 25-26 Modernising Adult Social Care Approach to Assessment and Review:* Develop a sustainable model for assessment and review that is responsive to the increasing demands in the community and allows the service to respond promptly to referrals and annual proportionate reviews introducing a greater range of assessment methods (community appointments, greater use of Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) partners, online assessment) and approaches to annual reviews (provider, telephone and questionnaire-style). This will reduce pressures on adult social care teams and enable a reduction in staff (agency) costs.

*CHW04 25-26 Implementation of Telecare Service Charges:* To support the costs of telecare services, a charging scheme is proposed for users deemed able to pay through financial assessment. Telecare, offering remote monitoring and emergency response, aids individuals living independently. With 3,000 users, a £2 weekly fee could generate income, accounting for some users declining the service. Consultation with Adult Social Care service users and residents without ongoing care packages would be required before implementation. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

*CYP01 25-26 LAC and Permanency/FPPP: Gordon Brown Centre Reduction in the Contribution for Promoting Independence work to Care Leavers by 50%:* These savings would be achieved by reducing the funding provided to the Promoting Independence project, delivered to Brent Care Leavers through the Gordon Brown Centre (GBC). The GBC is the Council's outdoor activity centre based in Hampshire, used primarily by schools and settings. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

*CYP02 25-26 Reduction in discretionary spend on the use of taxis and client subsistence payments:* There are two elements to this proposal – a reduction in discretionary spend on taxi fares and a reduction in discretionary spend on client payments for care leavers. This proposal will require changes in practice across CYP to ensure the ability to deliver it from April 2025. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

*CYP03 25-26 Cease the Safe Base Brent offer:* The Safe Base service is a mental health and wellbeing support service for Brent Care Leavers up to the age of 25 in higher education/apprenticeships. The highest percentage of service users are those attending university. The service is relatively longstanding (6 years) and around 25 young people access support each year. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

*LG01 25-26 Reduction in Members Allowances budget:* Spend for the year, including new uplift and additional Cabinet Member is predicted to be less than total budget. The saving that could be offered is £50k.

*LG02 25-26 Reduction in Car Club costs:* Based on past spending under the contract (which is determined by use) the budget for this contract could be reduced by £30k. An additional £20k could be saved through capping Directorate spend through the central budget. This would encourage use only when this form of transport is most cost effective.

*LG03 25-26 Outsource Occupational Health Service:* Outsource the provision of Occupational Health services to managers and staff at the council. In the course of procuring a provider, reduce the cost of the current provision that is delivered by agency staff. By switching to an external provider, the Council would only pay the costs for our actual usage.

*LG04 25-26 Deletion of two Trainee positions in Legal Services:* One trainee solicitor post and one apprentice solicitor post will be deleted.

*LG05 25-26 Increase in income – Legal Services Property and planning:* The income target for work undertaken for or charged to 3rd parties by the Property and Planning team has exceeded targets and it is considered a higher target could be set.

*NR01 25-26 Increase charge for bulky waste collection:* Increase the charge for bulky waste collections from £40 to up to £55 per collection, generating additional income of up to £30k annually, while remaining competitive with neighbouring boroughs.

*NR02 25-26 Increase garden waste annual subscription:* Raise the annual Garden Waste subscription fee by £4 to £69, generating an estimated £55k in additional income from approximately 15,000 signups/renewals.

*NR03 25-26 Increase to existing, or introduction of new, charges for additional and replacement waste containers (residual, recycling, food):* Introduce a £5 flat-rate delivery charge for recycling and food bin containers, aligning with Veolia contract practices and generating income to offset the current £10k monthly delivery cost.

*NR04 25-26 Stop subscription for Recyclopediā:* Ending our subscription for Recyclopediā, a recycling information subscription, to save about £6k on annual subscription charges. Currently the Council get about 12,000 clicks a month on average.

*NR05 25-26 Staffing and Structures Review of Public Realm Services:* Savings from a review and reorganisation of neighbourhood staffing and structure in Public Realm to complement place-making agenda; deletion of 3-4 posts depending on grade.

*PHRS01 25-26 Reducing staff posts and contract spend within the Shared Technology service:* To reduce support for Brent by approximately three FTE through a restructure and changes to business processes and through re-procurement of contracts. This saving will also impact on the other boroughs which use the service and similar savings are being agreed with Lewisham and Southwark.

*PHRS02 25-26 Reducing posts within the Communications, Insight and Innovation (CII) department:* CII includes a number of support services as well as teams which lead work on our innovation, data and digital programmes plus the Communications, Conferences and Events team. Where possible, the saving will be delivered by deleting vacant posts or through voluntary redundancies but there may be a need for compulsory redundancy.

*PHRS03 25-26 Increasing commercial income generated from The Drum:* By refocusing the team on more proactive external sales it will be possible to build on the venue's recovery and further increase occupancy rates of The Drum (particularly for the Grand Hall and Conference Hall) and thereby generate an extra £100,000 in commercial income per annum.

*PHRS04 25-26 Achieving management efficiencies across Revenue and Debt, Customer Services and Assessments and Brent Community Hubs:* An amalgamation of management posts across Revenue and Debt, Customer Services and Assessments and Brent Community Hubs.

*PHRS05 25-26 Achieving management efficiencies within Libraries, Arts and Heritage:* Achieving management efficiencies within Libraries, Arts and Heritage without adversely affecting service users.

*PHRS06 25-26 Increased income across Mortuary & Bereavement Operations (including Cemeteries) and Registration and Nationality:* Increased income generated across Mortuary & Bereavement Operations (including Cemeteries) and Registration and Nationality services.

*PHRS07 25-26 To reduce posts within the Communities and Partnerships Department:* Savings will be delivered predominantly by restructuring of existing roles within the directorate. Where appropriate, savings can also be made through offering vacant posts.

*Council Tax: Increase Council Tax by 4.99%, where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care and 2.99% is a general increase.* The council is required to make significant savings to deliver a legally required balanced budget. To help overcome this it is proposed to increase council tax by 4.99%, where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care and 2.99% is a general increase. The proposal will generate an additional £8.1m of recurring income for the Council and therefore avoid having to make further savings to key council services such as adult social care, children's services, etc. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

*New Council Tax Support Scheme:* The Council is proposing to amend the Council Tax Support scheme by introducing a standard 35% minimum payment for all working-age households, with Council Tax Support determined by income bands. Non-dependant charges are proposed to be simplified to flat rates of £8 per week for those out of work and £20 per week for those in work, streamlining the process



and reducing the administrative burden. The proposal will generate savings of £5m, helping to avoid making further cuts to essential services. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed as part of a separate approval process.**

## **Proposals Requiring a Full Equality Impact Assessment**

The proposed savings look to generate income for the Council, or to reduce or restructure service delivery for service users. Six budget savings proposals completed a full equality impact assessment due to the potential impact they may have on service delivery through the reduction or change in the service being provided. Attached to this report are the supporting EIA screenings for each savings proposal as well as the full Equality Analysis (the latter of which are summarised below). The proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme have been subject to a separate consultation and equalities impact assessment that will be considered by Cabinet and Council in February 2025 and have been referenced below for completeness and transparency, noting the cumulative impact along with the other budget savings proposals.

### **CHW02 (25/26): Increase Shared Lives capacity to provide as an alternative to respite in residential care**

The proposal is to widen the Brent Shared Lives offer for clients diagnosed with a mental health, learning disability, and/or autism spectrum disorder. Shared Lives is a Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulated in-house adult fostering or house sharing service, in which the client receives around the clock care according to their assessed eligible care needs. Carers, who are registered as self-employed, receive a weekly payment for the service they provide as well as annual essential and bespoke training. The goal of the proposal is to double the intake of Shared Lives Carers and provide more placements within the community, contributing towards the council's long-term savings plan, whilst continuing to offer quality based, cost-effective long term and respite placements.

**Overall Impact:** The proposal has positive impacts for older adults and disabled people, as the program's expansion will allow for more clients to access the program, which compares favourably to residential care or supported living options in terms of duration and meeting their assessed care and support needs.

### **CHW04 (25/26): Implementation of Telecare Service Charges**

The proposal is to implement charges for telecare services, which include 24/7 specialist telephone helpline support and assisted technologies like alarms and GPS trackers, helping vulnerable individuals maintain independence and receive critical support when needed. The proposal aligns with the council's principle of charging only those who can afford to pay, while ensuring no one is required to contribute beyond their means. A public consultation and detailed engagement process will precede implementation.

**Age:** Older adults, who make up the majority of telecare users, may experience a reduction in disposable income due to charges.

**Disability:** Disabled service users may experience a reduction in disposable income due to charges.

**Race:** Two-thirds of Adult Social Care service users are from ethnic minority backgrounds, reflecting a disproportionate impact.

**Overall Impact:** The proposal has negative financial impacts on some service users, particularly older adults, disabled people, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Mitigations including financial assessments, disability-related expenditure exceptions, income maximisation, and a public consultation process will help to ensure fairness and minimise hardship. Monitoring mechanisms will track ongoing impacts to ensure the policy remains equitable.

### **CYP01 (25/26): LAC and Permanency/FPPP: Gordon Brown Centre Reduction in the Contribution for Promoting Independence work to Care Leavers**

The proposal seeks to reduce the annual contribution for Promoting Independence work for Brent Care Leavers from £160K to £80K. This reduction will halve the number of weekends available for independence skills training at the Gordon Brown Centre (GBC) from 12 to 6 annually. The GBC programme equips care leavers with essential independent living skills including basic DIY, problem-solving for household issues, and the use of practical tools. While the service will remain in place, the reduction may result in delays for young people accessing the programme, potentially affecting their readiness for independent living. Mitigations include increasing the cohort size on GBC weekends and monitoring the impact on care leavers' progression to Brent Housing Panel.

**Age:** There is a negative impact on care leavers aged 16-25 who are eligible to attend GBC weekends to build skills for independent living. The reduced frequency may delay this cohort's readiness for independence, leading to slower progression to Brent Housing Panel for housing support.

**Race:** Care leavers from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately represented in the care system, making them more likely to be affected by this reduction.

**Overall Impact:** The proposal has negative impacts on care leavers aged 16-25, who may be disproportionately from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The reduced capacity of the GBC programme may lead to delays in care leavers' readiness for independent living, affecting their ability to access stable housing. The council justifies these changes due to budget constraints and proposes mitigations, including offering additional GBC weekend slots (if data indicates they are needed) via tracking the impact on care leavers' progression to housing. The proposal will be monitored quarterly, and adjustments will be made if the reduction leads to increased costs for high-support accommodation for care leavers.

### **CYP02 (25/26): Reduction in discretionary spend on the use of taxis and client subsistence payments**

The proposal aims to reduce discretionary spending on taxi fares and subsistence payments for care leavers. The objective is to encourage greater use of public transport (via bus passes and Oyster cards) and reduce extended subsistence payments beyond the current six-week support period. While the proposal seeks to promote independence and reduce costs, it could disproportionately impact vulnerable groups such as children, care leavers, and families, especially in emergency or safeguarding situations. Mitigation measures include retaining access to taxis in emergencies and supporting the transition to alternative travel options.

**Age:** Young people, including those in care and care leavers, may experience challenges in attending school or critical appointments, potentially affecting educational outcomes.

**Disability:** Those with mobility or learning disabilities may face additional challenges using public transport due to accessibility issues.

**Race:** Disproportionate representation of ethnic minority children in care may result in a greater impact on these groups, especially in terms of access to education and essential services.

**Sex:** Reduced access to taxis may create safety concerns for young women and girls, particularly when traveling at night.

**Sexual Orientation:** Young LGBTQ+ people may feel unsafe using public transport due to past experiences of discrimination or bullying.

**Gender Reassignment:** Those undergoing or having undergone gender reassignment may experience safety risks in public spaces, impacting their comfort with public transport use.

**Overall Impact:** While the proposal promotes cost savings and aims to foster greater independence for care leavers, it has negative implications across the protected characteristics of age, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment. The council plans to mitigate these impacts through emergency taxi provisions where necessary, and enhanced guidance on discretionary payments. Monitoring and review processes will be implemented to track the impact on outcomes for care leavers.

### **CYP03 (25/26): Cease the Safe Base Brent offer**

The proposal is to end the Safe Base service, a mental health and well-being support service for Brent care leavers in higher education or apprenticeships, which supports around 25 young people annually. The proposed service closure will achieve budget savings in the Brent Virtual School and Educational Psychology Service. Care leavers using the service will be signposted to free alternative services such as Young Minds, Kooth, and Free Your Mind, as well as mental health support available through universities and colleges. The council will ensure that all young people currently using the service have an allocated Personal Advisor (PA) to monitor their well-being.

**Age:** Care leavers aged up to 25 will be directly impacted by the closure of the Safe Base service. As young people transitioning to independence, they may face challenges in maintaining mental well-being without tailored support.

**Disability:** Care leavers with disabilities, including mental health conditions, may face barriers in accessing general mental health support services, as these services may not offer the same level of personalisation as Safe Base.

**Race:** Ethnic minority groups are disproportionately represented in care leaver populations, meaning this proposal could have a greater impact on Black, Asian, and minority ethnic care leavers.

**Overall Impact:** The proposal to cease the Safe Base service negatively impact on age, race, and disability. Young people in higher education, especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds or those with mental health conditions, may face challenges in accessing alternative support. However, these impacts are justified by the availability of alternative mental health services from Young Minds, Kooth, and Free Your Mind, as well as wellbeing support provided by universities and colleges. To support care leavers through this transition, Personal Advisors will monitor and report on any concerns arising from the service closure. The phased reduction of the service, from three days to one, aims to reduce the negative impact of an abrupt service withdrawal.

### **Increase in Council Tax by 4.99% in 2025/26**

To deliver a legally required balanced budget, it is proposed to increase Council Tax by 4.99%, where 2% is ring fenced for Adult Social Care and 2.99% is a general increase. The proposal will generate an additional £8.1m of recurring income for the Council and therefore avoid having to make further savings to key council services such as adult social care, children's services, etc.

**Impact on protected groups:** The increase in Council Tax will impact all residents within Brent who are eligible to pay Council Tax. As the increase has universal application, no particular group is targeted. However, although no protected characteristic is impacted more than another it is likely that some residents who do not qualify for Council Tax support (i.e. do not meet the threshold to receive financial support), will struggle to pay the additional Council Tax amount. In addition, the proposed cuts to the Council Tax Support Scheme for Financial Year 25/26 will mean that there will be less financial support available to residents, should they need it.

**Overall impact:** Although the overall impact has been suggested as neutral, an increase in Council tax will impact on middle to low-income earners who are also impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, and potentially those from protected groups. However, for the most vulnerable residents, the Council Tax Support scheme will partially mitigate this impact for those households who are living on low incomes and are eligible for Council Tax Support. The Council is also proposing to set aside £1.5m for a hardship fund to support residents under the Section 13A Discretionary Policy, where justified this will mean reducing residents' council tax liability to zero. Further mitigating actions are also available for residents and are highlighted in the socio-economic implications section.

### **New Council Tax Support Scheme**

To make significant savings, the Council is proposing to adjust the council tax savings scheme by introducing a standard 35% minimum payment for all working-age households, with Council Tax Support determined by income bands. Following a public consultation, a decision on the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26 will be made in March 2025 by Cabinet . The proposal is projected to generate savings of £5m, helping to avoid making further cuts to essential services.

**Impact on protected groups:** The proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme will have a negative impact on all residents eligible to pay Council Tax, and a disproportionate impact cannot be ruled out. Most claimants are female, indicating a potential disproportionate effect by gender. People between the ages of 46 and 66 make up most claimants, indicating this age group are also more likely to experience a disproportionate impact. Although socioeconomic status is not a protected characteristic, most claimants in receipt of working-age council tax support under the current scheme fall into the lowest income category and receive the highest level of

support. As a result, lower income households will be more impacted, and there may be a disproportionate socioeconomic implication to consider. Lower income households are also more likely to be from minority ethnic backgrounds, increasing the potential for disproportionate impacts based on race.

The proposed 5% increase to Council Tax for Financial Year 25/26 will also mean that council taxpayers will be more likely to have trouble meeting their financial obligations, particularly those on low incomes or with limited financial resilience.

**Overall impact:** The overall impact of the proposed changes will negatively impact all residents eligible to pay Council Tax, and will disproportionately impact low income working age households, who are more likely to be from a minority ethnic background. To mitigate these impacts, the Council proposes to set aside £1.5 million under the Section 13A Discretionary Policy to provide financial assistance to those struggling with the increased charges. Further mitigating actions are also available for residents and are highlighted in the socio-economic implications section.

#### 4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The table overleaf summarises the potential negative cumulative impacts on groups which have a protected characteristic.

Five of the Equality Impact Assessments have identified the potential for negative impacts. While there are specific justifications for the negative impacts, in summary they stem from the need to make necessary financial savings as a result of high inflation, increased demand for services, and pressures in temporary accommodation, among other contributing factors. Where potential negative impacts have been recognised, corresponding mitigation activities have also been identified wherever possible, with the goal of minimising the impacts felt by specific groups. It is also noted that several of the proposals aim to create sustainable long-term care and support services, which will over time have a positive impact as they aim to provide greater independence to clients.

Age, race, and disability are the most predominant groups impacted upon. Regarding race, available data from the Equality Impact Assessments has shown that a larger proportion of service users are from Black, Asian, and other Minority Ethnic backgrounds, which is reflective of Brent demography, as noted in the Demography Overview in section 2. It is, therefore, more likely that this protected group will be impacted to a greater extent by a reduction or change in services than other users.

While care experience is not yet a legally protected characteristic, the Council has demonstrated commitment to recognising and treating care experience as an internal protected characteristic, with work underway to determine how it can be embedded within our processes and approaches. It is noted that multiple savings proposals negatively impact this group, but that mitigation activities are in place to minimise them to the extent possible.

Given the nature and number of the proposals put forward impacting protected groups, consideration needs to be given to the cumulative impact of these proposals. It is possible that some individuals will be impacted by more than one of the proposals being put forward and therefore will be hit harder by these changes. Where proposals are accepted, the intersectional impacts will be monitored and evaluated over time and across services, to the extent that available data allows. It is likely that some service users also belong to more than one protected group and are impacted by more than one of these proposals. Although our current data collection systems don't allow us to identify these intersectional impacts definitively, as EIAs are reviewed over the lifespan of the project, we will monitor trends and impact and make adjustments accordingly. While we don't have a cumulative mitigation strategy for negative impacts in place, mitigation activities are recorded in the full EIAs for each proposal with associated negative impacts.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Age (e.g. children &amp; elderly)</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	<b>Marriage or Civil Partnership</b>	<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Service Area</b>
Increase Shared Lives capacity to provide as an alternative to respite in residential care CHW02-25/26	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	Adult Social Care
Implementation of Telecare Service Charges CHW12-25/26	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	Adult Social Care
LAC and Permanency/FPPP: Gordon Brown Centre Reduction in the Contribution for Promoting Independence work to Care Leavers CYP02-25/26	-1	0	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	Children and Young People

Reduction in discretionary spend on the use of taxis and client subsistence payments CYP13-25/26	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	Children and Young People
Cease the Safe Base Brent offer CYP15-25/26	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	Children and Young People
Council Tax increase	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Council wide
New Council Tax Support Scheme	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	Household Services
<b>Overall impacts</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-2</b>	

## 5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Certain groups within the population are more likely than others to live in a low-income household. In Brent, survey analysis shows that those living on lower incomes are more likely to be from Black ethnic groups; residents with a disability or long-term illness; older residents; those with no qualifications; those who are not in work; and those who live in social housing.

The Council is currently updating the Brent Black Community Action Plan (the Plan) to ensure its priorities remain relevant and responsive to the changing context of recent years. The Plan will be updated in early 2025 following a series of community consultations, including one held in November 2024, which identified support for employment and enterprise as a priority theme. Within this theme, specific programs and projects will be developed to promote inclusive economic growth.

There are projects underway to support residents with learning disabilities, mental health, autism, and who are neurodiverse into paid employment, including a partnership which identifies and offers work placements within Adult Social Care services for individuals diagnosed with autism. Additional activities include tailoring existing direct payments to those in receipt of support to focus on seeking engagement and employment opportunities, and creating navigation services in the Council's day service, working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions.

The proposals regarding increasing Council Tax and adjusting the Council Tax Support Scheme have the potential to negatively impact on middle to low-income earners, and families and residents from lower socio-economic groups, who are also impacted by the cost-of-



living crisis. This will be mitigated by early and accessible communication with residents affected, continuing to offer support for vulnerable residents, and more effective working with partners to ensure resources are used effectively.

The Council is aware of the cumulative impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the support that our residents and service users may require at this time. The following support has been made available:

**Financial Support:** households across Brent can access financial assistance through the following funds:

- Resident Support Fund: this is available to Brent residents who are having difficulty due to unforeseen financial circumstances.
- Discretionary Housing Payment: A one off payment can be provided to assist with rent shortfall, rent deposits and rent in advance if a Brent resident needs to move home.
- Council Tax Hardship Fund: The Council is also proposing to set aside £1.5m for a hardship fund to support residents with Council Tax payments under the Section 13A Discretionary Policy of the Local Government Finance Act.

Certain eligibility criteria must be met to access financial support.

**Support and Advice:** Brent Hubs can provide support and advice to Brent residents who are struggling to pay their utility bills. This can include assistance with completing funding applications for support from local and national schemes, including the Brent Resident Support Fund, referral routes to other advisory agencies who specialise in energy support such as Green Doctors and SHINE, referral routes to food banks and emergency supermarket vouchers and urgent support with topping up pre-payment gas and electricity meters.

Brent's Family Wellbeing Centres also provide a range of community-led services to families that live in Brent and offer support for a range of topics including help with finding childcare and free nursery entitlements, sessions with employment advisers and support in returning to work, as well as sector specific recruitment events and programmes.

In addition, the New Horizons Centre which opened in January 2025 on the site of the previous New Millennium Day Centre, offers an expanded range of support services, including a new Community Wellbeing Service. This initiative, a partnership between the Council and local charity Sufra NW London is designed to support low-income households with access to affordable groceries, healthy meals, and one-to-one support through a £4 per week membership model. Throughout 2025, the centre will continue to add new services, including family housing needs assessments, employment support, and debt and immigration advisors.

## **6 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

Of the budget proposals that were subject to an equality screening, several have staffing implications arising from staff restructures or service redesign. Where there are staffing implications for a third party, the council will work with the third-party organisation to ensure that the equality implications are understood, and appropriate steps taken to minimise any adverse impacts.

To mitigate against compulsory staff redundancies, a number of the proposals will achieve a reduction by giving up vacant posts or through natural turnover. In these cases, it is considered that there will be no impact on protected groups. The Council also offered a voluntary redundancy scheme in June-August 2024, giving employees the opportunity to voluntarily leave the Council with a financial package, and helping to achieve necessary financial savings. This was done with the intention of minimising the need for compulsory redundancies. When the council is required to undertake compulsory redundancies, full EIAs are undertaken as part of the consultation process.