


|   |  |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Scrutiny Committee<br/>25<sup>th</sup> February 2025</p>                                  |
|   | <p><b>Report from the Corporate Director<br/>of Neighbourhoods and<br/>Regeneration</b></p>  |
|   | <p><b>Cabinet Member for Safer<br/>Communities, Jobs and Skills<br/>Cllr Harbi Farah</b></p> |
| <p><b>Brent's Emerging Employment Strategy (2025-2030)</b></p>                    |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>   | All   |
| <b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b><br>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act) | Open  |
| <b>List of Appendices:</b>   | Appendix 1: Case Studies  |
| <b>Background Papers:</b>  | None  |
| <b>Contact Officer(s):</b><br>(Name, Title, Contact Details)   | <p>Ala Uddin - Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration<br/><a href="mailto:ala.uddin@brent.gov.uk">ala.uddin@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Jim Jessop / Joanne Thomas (job share)<br/>Employment Strategy &amp; Delivery Senior Manager<br/>Neighbourhoods and Regeneration<br/><a href="mailto:jim.jessop@brent.gov.uk">jim.jessop@brent.gov.uk</a> /<br/><a href="mailto:joanne.thomas@brent.gov.uk">joanne.thomas@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Will Holt - Change and Improvement Programme Lead, Change and Customer Insight<br/><a href="mailto:will.holt@brent.gov.uk">will.holt@brent.gov.uk</a></p> |

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The emerging Brent Employment Strategy 2025-2030 aims to create a more inclusive, dynamic, and resilient workforce by addressing key employment challenges and promoting sustainable career opportunities. The strategy aligns with Brent's local labour market, ensuring that residents—particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds—can access employment, apprenticeships, and skills development programmes. It leverages council

influence through planning and procurement, strengthens partnerships, and supports residents in securing long-term, quality employment.

- 1.2 It is a partnership strategy, as responsibility for delivery lies with organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors and with the engagement and involvement of residents and communities whilst aligning with national, regional and sub-regional strategies. The council will take a strategic role, convening, coordinating facilitating and monitoring activity.
- 1.3 Key objectives include:
  - working with partners, particularly the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Greater London Authority (GLA) and the West London Alliance (WLA)
  - contributing to increased employment rates, reduced un- and underemployment,
  - address income inequality, and promote workforce participation among economically inactive residents, women, and disadvantaged groups.
  - the development of growth sector skills in digital, green industries, healthcare, and creative sectors, equipping residents for growing job markets.
- 1.4 Engagement with stakeholders will ensure the strategy is reflective of Brent's economic landscape.
- 1.5 The strategy draws on an evidence base that will be updated regularly to ensure that the most current and relevant information and data are considered alongside continuing engagement and discussion with partners. Implementation and monitoring of the strategy is supported by an action plan, which will also be a working document subject to regular review.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Acknowledge Progress: the committee notes and comments on the progress made so far on the Employment Strategy.
- 2.2 Note the reliance on external funding for Brent Works and the employment programmes.
- 2.3 Endorses the approach to strategy development
  - The committee agrees the approach to developing the strategy, including local labour market alignment, stakeholder engagement, and sector-focused interventions
  - The committee endorses the approach of working closely with key partners, especially DWP, GLA and WLA using the council's leverage and influence to align wider strategies and delivery with Brent's objectives and needs.

- 2.4 Note the strategic objectives and expected outcomes, ensuring alignment with Brent's long-term economic and employment goals
- 2.5 Strengthen social value commitments: the committee support ensuring that suppliers and contractors actively support local employment as part of their social value obligations.

### **3.0 Detail**

#### **3.1 Current employment landscape:**

3.1.1 Brent has a population of 339,816 based on the 2021 Census. Some headline statistics relevant to the local labour market are:

- A median age of 35, compared to the UK average of 40.
- 21.7% of the population over 16 having no qualifications.
- Employment rate of 67.6% compared to the UK's 76.8%
- Annual unemployment rate of 5.7% versus the national average of 3.4%.
- High levels of economic inactivity at 29.1%, above the UK's 21.0%, with students making up a large portion of the inactive population. This also includes those with long-term illnesses or caring responsibilities, creating barriers to workforce participation.
- Out of the total residents in work - 51.3% of residents working in high-skilled roles (such as managers, professionals, and associate professionals), which is lower than London's 63.1% average but in line with the national rate.
- The claimant count (a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, based on administrative data from the benefits system). is at 6.2% (of the working age population) compared to the UK average of 3.0%.
- 11,250 claimants are aged 25 to 49 and 5,035 claimants aged 50+.
- Average gross weekly pay in Brent is £747 (London's average is £853).

3.1.2 These figures suggest that many residents lack the qualifications or experience necessary for higher-paying jobs. A considerable portion of the workforce is employed in mid- and low-skilled roles, including administrative, skilled trades, service, and elementary occupations, reflecting both the borough's economic profile and the prevalence of lower-paid work. Addressing this gap will require targeted vocational training and employer-led career development pathways.

3.1.3 The high claimant figures indicate potential mismatches between available jobs and the skills or circumstances of job seekers, reinforcing the importance of tailored employment programmes and skills development initiatives.

3.1.4 One of the reasons for some of the above statistics relate to Brent's business base, which comprises 26,951 businesses, predominantly micro-businesses (businesses employing less than 10 people), employing around 77,023 people in total.

## 3.2 Barriers to employment

3.2.1 A key barrier is language proficiency, making communication and access to training opportunities more difficult for some. Additionally, health-related issues, including mental health conditions, can impact residents' ability to secure and retain work. Childcare availability and affordability further present challenges, particularly for parents balancing work and family responsibilities.

3.2.2 These barriers align with findings from the Outcome Based Review (OBR), which highlighted the impact of such factors on workforce participation and economic inclusion. Addressing these issues, where feasible, is crucial to ensuring equitable access to employment opportunities and fostering a more inclusive labour market. It also needs to be acknowledged that improving accessibility to and affordability of childcare is outside of the scope of the employment team.

3.2.3 National Government-funded programmes, delivered across the sub-region by the WLA Programmes like Work Well and Connect to Work aim to support these groups in re-entering employment through targeted interventions.

3.2.4 In summary, whilst Brent's youthful and diverse population offers potential, the borough continues to grapple with educational and employment challenges, underscoring the importance of targeted interventions and support systems to foster economic resilience and opportunity.

3.2.5 By aligning existing successes with new strategic priorities, Brent's Employment Strategy will create a more inclusive, responsive, and impactful approach to employment and skills development in the borough.

## 3.3 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.3.1 The strategy aims to support several borough plan priorities including:

- **Prosperity and Stability in Brent**  
By providing access to good work to residents and a high-quality brokerage service for businesses to ensure they can access and recruit the talent they need for success.
- **A Cleaner, Greener Future**  
By delivering green skills to both green and circular economy sectors as well as upskilling residents in green construction skills and recruiting them into the sector.
- **Thriving Communities**  
Supporting economic inclusion by placing residents into quality sustainable jobs and businesses by providing the skills and talents they need to thrive and grow.
- **A Healthier Brent**  
Tackling the pockets of disadvantage and deprivation, supporting people with health issues and disabilities and providing a solid sustainable economic base for prosperity.

3.3.2 As well as the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, levelling up opportunities to grow skills and gain employment and Brent's Digital Strategy delivering initiatives and support to grow digital skills in support of Labour Market access.

## 4.0 Current Activities

### 4.1 Brent Works & Employment Services Team

4.2 The Employment Services team provides job support, apprenticeships, and career development aligned with council strategies. The team oversees job brokerage and employment programmes, analysing labour market data to address training gaps. It secures external funding, partnering with many organisations including the WLA, and the Forge in Park Royal. In 2023-24, the team managed programmes such as S106 employment and training plan obligations, supported internships, and securing £755,000 in UKSPF funding to support unemployed residents until March 2025.

4.3 Brent Works offers a free job brokerage service to residents and employers, providing career advice support, job matching, and training in collaboration with employers like the NHS, McDonald's, and HS2. It prioritizes sustainable employment, ensuring jobs with fair wages and career growth opportunities and does not service zero-hour contracts.

4.4 Brent Works hosts key employment events, including the annual Wembley Jobs Fair (with over 8,300 attendees and with 300 job outcomes), National Apprenticeship Week, National Careers Week, International Women's Day, and other initiatives with schools, the NHS, and DWP. These events are attended by employers from both within and outside of Brent.

4.5 The team also focuses on developing relationships with businesses in key growth sectors including in the **green and circular economies**. We have seen a year-on-year increase in these roles. With employers in the borough such as HS2, Park Royal Businesses, Wates and Zest Eco, we are expecting this to continue as traditional methods are being replaced with Modular Construction, Retro Fit and EV Charging points.

4.6 In the last 12 months Brent Works has placed 37 out of 51 apprenticeships in the Construction sector. Many of these roles are classed as "Green Jobs" due to the materials, methods and processes used to minimise carbon and waste and to increase energy efficiency.

4.7 Another example of our recruitment work in this sector is for Charlie Bigham (food manufacturer) who have a Green Business Plan which includes replacing plastic packages with wooden trays sourced from a French company who have waste cheese boxes that are recycled. They also use ceramic dishes and recyclable cardboard. They also give food to charities to make sure that surplus food and ingredients goes to the homeless and those in need.

4.8 Each year, Brent's employment initiatives help around 500 residents secure jobs and apprenticeships, with over 80% earning at least the London Living Wage, consistently achieving employment and apprenticeship targets; comparatively outperforming other boroughs of similar size job brokerages. The team also secures funding for sectoral and employability skills training, with over £750,000 awarded through the GLA's Skills Bootcamps since 2022. This programme is part of Brent's borough plan to provide high-quality skills and job opportunities to its residents and benefits employers to fill specific skills shortage vacancies.

4.9 In partnership with Qualified 4 Life (Q4L), a Wembley based training provider, the team support residents aged 19+ to get a level 3 diploma in gas engineering. This intensive 16-week course provides in-demand skills training, a guaranteed job interview and the opportunity to earn higher wages over time. Since November 2022, 78 residents have started the programme, 59 have successfully completed the diploma of which 49 have successfully gone into employment. We are currently concluding cohort 6 of our Skills Bootcamp gas engineering programme, with 20 learners expected to complete the programme by end of February 2025.

4.10 Brent Works collaborates closely with other council services, including Children and Young People (CYP), Social Services, Community Development, and Planning. This ensures targeted support for vulnerable groups such as care leavers, residents with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and those not in education, employment, or training (NEETs).

4.11 In terms of SEND, Brent council has been delivering the Supported Internships programme since 2020. The programme runs through the academic year and aims to provide our young neurodiverse residents with the opportunity to gain vital work experience and employability skills to kickstart their careers. The programme offers a combined mix of study and work experience over an academic year. It is open to Brent residents aged 17-24 with an active Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. It has been carefully designed to help young neurodiverse Brent residents gain new skills and secure jobs.

4.12 It is delivered in partnership with College of Northwest London (providing the curriculum element of the internship), and Kaleidoscope (providing the employment preparation support). The programme is based at Brent Civic Centre and includes neighbouring employers. There is a sister programme based at Charing Cross Hospital. Since its start in 2020, 33 interns have completed the programme with 14 interns securing employment and another 12 going into education. The programme is coordinated by Brent's Employment Team. The current internships are hosted by several teams across the council including School Admissions, Adult Mental Health Service, Wellbeing Centres, The Drum, Nationality and Registrations, Libraries, Wellbeing Centre, the Digital post and Audiovisuals.

4.13 By integrating resources and expertise across other services in the council, Brent Works enhances employment outcomes and provides holistic support tailored to individual needs.

4.14 The council's recent re-structure offers the further opportunity for even closer alignment CYP and Community Safety when the service moves into the Children, Young People and Community Development Directorate

## **5.0 Shaping the Brent Employment Strategy**

5.1 The Employment Strategy has been developed in response to the challenges posed by recent economic conditions, whilst emphasising the significant opportunities arising from growth both within, and outside of, the borough.

5.2 The Strategy aims to develop effective partnerships acknowledging that the council on its own, while it has significant relevant powers, influence and leverage, is not able to take sole responsibility for a strategy that encompasses such a wide range of programmes, partners and services.

### **5.3 Working within the Sub-Region (WLA)**

5.4 The strategy will align with two key WLA programmes:

- WorkWell, is a programme to help disabled people and people with health conditions to access an early-intervention work and health assessment service, with low-intensity holistic support for their health-related barriers to employment (such as employer liaison and work and health coaching). It will provide a single, joined-up view and gateway into the services that are available locally to tackle their specific needs. This could include healthcare professionals, community sector services, health promotion programmes, more intensive employment support. The funding is £3.8m, for 4,000 places, to March 2026 across the 7 WLA boroughs. Brent residents access this programme via referrals from Brent Works, Brent Health Matters, JCP+ and by WLA's No Wrong Door initiative.
- From April 2025, Connect to Work will help disabled people, people with health conditions, and those with more complex barriers to work who are outside the labour market to find a suitable job and sustain work. It will also help those in work but at risk of falling out of the labour market (and who will struggle to get back into work if they lose their job) to retain their employment. (The funding is £43.2m for 10,800 places to March 2030 across the 7 WLA boroughs).

5.5 Brent will receive 25% of the WLA allocations due to high health-related unemployment, deprivation levels, and disability rates.

5.6 These initiatives strengthen Brent's strategic approach by:

- Expanding support for vulnerable groups, particularly those with health conditions or disabilities.
- Improving access to quality jobs and tackling insecure employment.
- Addressing skills gaps through targeted interventions.
- Enhancing partnerships with WLA, NHS, and employers.

### **5.7 Outcome Based Review**

5.8 As part of the November 2022 Transformation Work Programme update, CMT approved an Employment and Skills themed OBR as a key priority for 2023, to be shaped by and follow the delivery of the (then ongoing) Cost-of-Living themed OBR.

5.9 In January 2023, to ensure the OBR was targeted at Brent localities and communities with the highest need and where the greatest impact could be made, it was agreed that further development and launch of the OBR would await release and analysis of 2021 Census data for Economic Activity and Qualifications topics. This analysis was completed in August 2023 and published on [Brent Open Data](#).

5.10 Analysis of the 2021 Census data for Economic Activity and Qualifications showed that Stonebridge was the poorest performing ward for employment levels. Stonebridge has the lowest employment rate of 16–64-year-olds of any Brent ward, with just 56% of local working-age residents in employment.

5.11 Compared with other Brent wards, Stonebridge also has the highest proportion of economically inactive residents (35.8%), and second highest unemployed population (8.3%). Similarly, a high proportion (20%) of residents living in Stonebridge have no qualifications, with just 35% of the population having higher-level qualifications.

5.12 As a result, it was agreed that the OBR would focus on Stonebridge residents and identifying ways of helping them gain qualifications and move into work or higher-paid work. The learning from this ward and approach could then be adapted and applied across the borough.

5.13 To gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities and key issues preventing Stonebridge residents moving into work or gaining qualifications, a significant amount of engagement with residents and partner organisations was undertaken.

5.14 In October and November 2023, a series of ethnographic case studies were developed, which tell the stories of different Stonebridge residents. These case studies provide insight into the backgrounds and lives of different residents, including the challenges and barriers they face in accessing upskilling opportunities or moving into work.

5.15 A partners launch event was hosted in January 2024 at Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre. This brought together colleagues from across the council, including DWP, Brent Works and Brent Start, as well as a range of Voluntary and Community Sector partners involved in the delivery of employment support in the area. This event, along with ongoing community research, service mapping and ethnographic case studies, supported the development of a shared and detailed view of the key barriers residents in the area faced when trying to access upskilling opportunities and move into work.

5.16 While these barriers were identified through engagement with a specific Stonebridge focus, it is acknowledged that these barriers are likely common across the borough.



5.17 Childcare was found to be a key barrier for many residents. Childcare costs and commitments can often prevent parents from going back to work or pursuing opportunities to advance their career. The OBR found that Stonebridge had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest proportion of residents who are inactive in the labour market due to caring commitments. In Stonebridge, around 13% of women aged 16-64 were economically inactive because they were looking after their home or family. This rose to around 18% for women aged 35-49.

5.18 During focus groups and ethnographic interviews, residents explained that childcare can also be a significant barrier to accessing training and upskilling opportunities. They explained that often, they are unable to attend the skills classes they want to (for example, ESOL classes) due to ongoing childcare commitments. Another resident that we engaged with described how they had given up their career in Social Care due to their ongoing childcare commitments, and the cost of childcare provision.

5.19 **English language proficiency** was also found to be an obstacle for many residents in Stonebridge. 26% of residents living in Stonebridge have a main language other than English, and 6% of residents cannot speak English well or at all. When analysing employment rates in conjunction with English language proficiency, the impact of this barrier is evident. Of Stonebridge residents who could speak English very well or well, 70% were in employment. Conversely, of those who could not speak English well or at all, just 51% were in employment.

5.20 Language proficiency can be a huge barrier for residents as they may face challenges pursuing careers in the fields or professions which align with their interests, experience and qualifications.

5.21 There are also barriers for foreign nationals moving to the UK, many of whom have qualifications obtained abroad that cannot be easily converted to the UK qualifications system. One resident explained that their application to convert their qualifications had been rejected, and that they were still waiting for their immigration status to be approved.

5.22 Other barriers that residents experienced in moving into work or accessing training included health, financial issues and a lack of digital capabilities. Mental health, and wider health implications can often be a significant barrier to people entering employment – this is particularly prevalent in Stonebridge where almost 6% of the working age population are out of work due to sickness or disability.

5.23 Financial barriers can prevent residents accessing paid-for courses that may provide them the new skills required to move into employment. Residents are more focussed on 'getting by' and finance-related issues, including maintaining their housing arrangements, than looking for upskilling or career progression opportunities.

5.24 Basic digital skills are fast becoming essential for employment. These skills can help residents to find a job and make it easier for residents to apply for jobs. Stonebridge ward ranks within the top 10% of wards at most risk of digital exclusion nationally.

5.25 Having identified these barriers, and synthesised other discovery work outputs into a series of insight posters, a large-scale 'Visioning Day' event was delivered, bringing together a approx. 60 internal stakeholders and external partners to jointly develop solutions in response to the findings. A series of potential solutions were identified and had been developed into potential prototypes. Prototypes focussed around three key themes, which have been further developed following the Visioning Day:

5.26 Information campaigns regarding parents' childcare entitlements and to support them in access to care and careers.

- This proposal was further developed, and the idea of a 'Wembley Jobs Fair' type event, focussed on supporting those with childcare needs into work and raising awareness of their childcare entitlements is being co-developed between colleagues in Early Help and Brent Works.
- Bolstering employment offers through our existing services (e.g. New Horizons Centre) to support most in need residents into work.
- This work has progressed significantly, with a strong commitment to delivering Employment support through existing Community locations, including the New Horizons Centre and Roy Smith House, as outlined below.
- Supporting Young People into careers in the NHS via the relationship and arrangements in place between Brent Works/Brent Employment Team and the Northwest London NHS Skills Academy.
- As well as the potential to explore opportunities that exist in Park Royal, including in creative industries, as part of Brent Council's partnership with the Youth Futures Foundation-funded Flourishing Futures partnership.

5.27 Wider work directly informed by the OBR findings include the utilisation of a [commercial unit at Roy Smith House](#), Stonebridge, for community use, which will be a new and accessible space for local residents facing the challenges identified in the OBR. This unit is being fit out to include a training suite and other flexible spaces and facilities and is intended to be let to a local community organisation through the first application of the council's new market rent reduction framework.

5.28 Through this new process, as part of their bids for the lease, providers will be expected to deliver a range of activities tailored to the local community linked to outcomes including employment, education and skills - such as improving qualifications, skill levels and work readiness of residents. The bidding process for this lease is currently open and due to conclude late February. Following this, bids will be evaluated and the organisation with highest scoring bid is expected to be awarded the lease at a reduced rate on the condition that they deliver and evidence the outcomes as part of the annual return.

5.29 The OBR findings have also recently shaped the new model of support that launched at the New Horizons Centre, Roundwood, from January 2025. This new long-term service consists of an aligned Brent Hubs and Sufra-NW London wrap-around support service aimed at helping residents to become more resilient and self-sufficient. The service operates on a membership model with residents paying a nominal £4 per-week fee to access a range of support including:

- 1-2-1 assessment with an advisor and creation of a personal development plan
- Welfare, health and wellbeing and employment advice and workshops
- discounted weekly shop
- free lunch and evening meals from the community café

5.30 This model was initially piloted in 2023-24 using a membership period of 3-months. Evaluation of the pilot coupled with the learning from the OBR has informed a revised model, with increased focus on employment and skills outcomes. This includes a 6-month membership period designed to support members closer to work readiness and will be further developed to include stronger links and pathways to Brent Start and Brent Works services earlier in the personal development planning process.

5.31 The approach and learning from the OBR, including working more closely with new partners to achieve aligned outcomes, is already being applied to other areas of the borough, including at the Community Hub and Skills Academy in the Grand Union Development in Alperton led by London Community Kitchen. The Community Hub comprises of a café and kitchen, a Skills Academy and a Green Skills Centre and aims to address the pressing issues of unemployment and shortage of hospitality workers within London, empowering individuals (including a tailored offer for those with support needs) to develop life skills and job readiness.

### **5.32 Building on Brent Works and Employment Services to inform the Strategy**

5.33 Brent Works has successfully operated as a trusted brokerage service, connecting local businesses with jobseekers through targeted job-matching, screening, and recruitment support. The employment services team has also expanded sector-specific support, particularly in growth industries like digital, green energy, creative sectors, and gas engineering.

5.34 Additionally, community outreach through hubs has provided tailored employment support, ensuring harder-to-reach groups can access opportunities. The Council has also leveraged its planning and procurement powers, securing Section 106 (s106) agreements to create job and apprenticeship opportunities within new developments and social value relating to employment via procurement contracts. There are currently 17 live construction sites with S106 obligations, each with different end dates. Among the biggest projects in terms employment impact are; Grand Union - with total jobs and apprenticeships achieved 141, secondly, the Peel Precinct 67 jobs and 18 apprenticeships created. Northwich Park achieve 66 jobs and 3 apprenticeships.

### **5.35 How this work will Shape the Strategy.**

5.36 In developing the strategy, our approach will consider.

#### **a) Facilitating Employer Engagement and Job Brokerage**

Brent Works will work to facilitate and expand partnerships with employers, creating more apprenticeships, and training opportunities. We will focus particularly on growth sectors such as HS2 and the Park Royal business

cluster. By enhancing job brokerage services, we will enable better screening, job matching, and provide increased post-employment support to improve job retention and career progression.

**b) Enabling Support for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Residents**

We are committed to tackling barriers to employment for our most vulnerable residents. Through targeted employability programmes, we will address challenges such as childcare, financial hardship, health issues, and digital skills gaps. Brent Works will broaden its outreach by partnering with community hubs like The Living Room and integrate employability coaching with ESOL provision, improve access to ESOL and digital skills by strengthening partnerships with Brent Start and colleges to provide free and targeted upskilling programmes. Subject to funding we will also enhance access to Supported Internships for SEND residents, using funding from sources like UKSPF to create clearer job pathways for disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities and disabled residents.

**c) Leveraging Our Role to Secure Job Opportunities**

Brent Council will leverage its influence across planning, procurement, and community partnerships to unlock employment opportunities for local residents. We will ensure that employment-linked obligations in contracts are delivered, including:

- **Planning and Development:** Facilitating s106 agreements to secure jobs and apprenticeships from developers.
- **Service Procurement:** Strengthening social value clauses in council contracts to increase local job opportunities.
- **Community Partnerships:** Acting as an intermediary between businesses, health services, and training providers to ensure employment support meets workforce needs.
- **Collaborate with statutory employment agencies –** Work closely with DWP, Jobcentre Plus, and local employment services to create a joined-up support system.

**d) Promoting Career Progression and Job Quality**

Brent Works will focus not only on helping residents secure their first job but also on supporting their long-term career development. The Brent Good Work Standard will encourage employers to adopt fair wages, inclusive recruitment practices, and provide training and wellbeing support for employees. We will work with training providers and businesses to enhance access to leadership development, in-work progression, and industry-recognised qualifications.

**e) Supporting Health-Related and Youth Employment Needs**

Brent's significant proportion of residents with health conditions will benefit from strengthened partnerships with initiatives like Work Well and Connect to Work, ensuring tailored employment pathways. We will further support youth

employment through initiatives like Flourishing Futures, collaborating with education providers and Park Royal employers to create clear career pathways for young people from disadvantaged areas.

#### **f) Facilitating Growth and Skills Development for Emerging Industries**

- Subject to funding, sector-specific employability programmes will continue, focusing on digital, green industries, creative sectors, and gas engineering. Through collaboration with employers and training providers, we aim to expand opportunities, remove barriers, and support career transitions for those furthest from the labour market.
- Industry-focused training – Secure funding to deliver sector-specific employability programmes.
- Expanded placements and apprenticeships – Work with employers to provide structured training and job experience.
- Removing skills barriers – Offer targeted training in digital literacy, vocational qualifications, and industry certifications.
- Holistic career support – Provide tailored career coaching, mentoring, and flexible learning pathways for unemployed and low-skilled workers.

5.37 This collaborative approach ensures that individuals gain the skills needed for sustainable careers while meeting industry demands.

#### **5.38 Alignment of Employment Strategy with Skills Strategy**

5.39 The Employment Strategy aligns with the Skills Strategy by ensuring that job opportunities, workforce development, and business engagement are supported through targeted skills initiatives. By aligning job opportunities with workforce training, the Employment Strategy ensures a skilled workforce that meets employer demands, fosters lifelong learning, strengthens business-education partnerships, closes skills gaps, and promotes business investment in training. This integrated approach sustains workforce development and enhances economic growth in Brent.

5.40 Each objective contributes to skills development:

- **Job Readiness and Career Progression** – The Strategy enhances employability by promoting literacy, numeracy, and soft skills development, strengthening industry connections, and aligning job placements with labour market intelligence.
- **Employer Investment in Workforce Development** – Businesses are encouraged to invest in training and upskilling employees, fostering job retention, succession planning, and collaboration with educators to enhance work-based learning.
- **Preparation for Future Jobs** – The strategy supports skills training in emerging industries, increases industry placements, strengthens employer partnerships, and removes employment barriers such as digital and language skills.

- **Collaboration in Technical and Vocational Training** – A structured approach ensures smooth transitions between education and work, supports underrepresented groups, provides career guidance, and aligns education with local employment needs.

#### **5.41 Stakeholder engagement**

5.42 An Employment Strategy Stakeholder Consultation event took place on 27th January, bringing together key partners, including DWP, West London Alliance, businesses, colleges, and community organisations. Further consultation will be conducted by Nascent Rae, gathering insights from local businesses and community representatives to refine and finalise the strategy.

### **6.0 Draft Employment Strategy:**

6.1 By integrating the objectives of the recent White paper, OBR findings, targeted employment support, the Skills Strategy and partnerships with key stakeholders, the employment strategy will ensure inclusive, accessible, and sustainable career opportunities for residents, particularly those in the most disadvantaged communities.

#### **6.2 Mission of the Employment Strategy**

6.3 The mission of the Employment Strategy is to **empower residents**, especially those facing barriers to employment, by providing tailored support, education, and job opportunities that align with local economic growth sectors. The strategy seeks to increase employment rates, reduce inequality, promote sector-specific skills development, and build partnerships with businesses and educational institutions to create a sustainable and inclusive workforce in Brent.

#### **6.4 Strategic Objectives and Expected Outcomes**

##### **a) Increase Employment Rates**

- **Objective:** Facilitate greater access to employment by expanding targeted employment programmes, skills development initiatives, and partnerships with local employers.
- **Outcome:** More Brent residents will be supported into jobs that align with their skills and aspirations, leading to an overall rise in employment rates for Employment Services. Success will be measured by increased sustained employment, improved sector diversity, and higher earnings for residents.

##### **b) Reduce Unemployment and Underemployment**

- **Objective:** Support residents into meaningful employment by improving job-matching services, providing tailored career support, and enhancing access to training and development.
- **Outcome:** A reduction in unemployment and underemployment, with more residents securing stable and fulfilling work. Success will be reflected in

improved job retention rates and a decrease in reliance on low-paid or insecure work.

**c) Reduce Income Inequality**

- **Objective:** Promote fair access to economic opportunities by ensuring that employment and skills initiatives support career progression, particularly for underrepresented groups.
- **Outcome:** A more equitable distribution of earnings across Brent, with increased income levels for lower-paid residents. Success indicators will include a narrowing of pay gaps across different demographics and improved access to higher-paying roles.

**d) Support Economically Inactive Residents into Employment**

- **Objective:** Engage and support economically inactive residents, including those with long-term health conditions, disabilities, and caring responsibilities, by providing accessible employment pathways and tailored support.
- **Outcome:** More economically inactive residents will have the opportunity to enter or return to the workforce, leading to increased workforce participation. Success will be measured by higher employment rates among groups facing the greatest barriers to work.

**e) Promote Employment in Growth Sectors**

- **Objective:** Enable residents to access opportunities in key growth sectors such as technology, green energy, and healthcare by working with industry partners to provide relevant training and employment pathways.
- **Outcome:** A workforce better equipped for emerging industries, with higher numbers of residents securing jobs in growth sectors. Success will be reflected in increased sector-specific training completions and employer-reported skills matches.

**f) Support Disadvantaged Groups into Employment**

- **Objective:** Provide targeted support for residents facing employment barriers, including those with disabilities, health conditions, or mental health challenges, ensuring they have equal opportunities to enter and thrive in the workforce.
- **Outcome:** Greater inclusion in the labour market, with more disadvantaged residents securing and sustaining employment. Success will be tracked through improved employment rates for underrepresented groups and stronger employer engagement in inclusive hiring practices.

**g) Expand Apprenticeships and Support Youth and Older Workers**

- **Objective:** Work with local businesses to expand apprenticeship and training opportunities, ensuring young people and older workers can develop skills that meet employer needs.
- **Outcome:** Increased participation in apprenticeships and career transition programmes, leading to better employment prospects for young people and

older workers. Success will be measured by improved long-term employment outcomes and greater employer investment in workforce development.

#### **h) Increase Female Workforce Participation**

- **Objective:** Support women's access to employment by improving pathways into work, expanding childcare provision, and promoting flexible working arrangements.
- **Outcome:** Higher levels of female workforce participation, particularly in leadership roles and sectors where women are underrepresented. Success will be reflected in an increase in women entering and progressing in employment, alongside improved gender pay equity.

#### **i) Influence National and Regional Employment Programmes**

- **Objective:** Work in partnership with national and regional employment initiatives to maximise local opportunities and ensure Brent residents benefit from wider economic policies.
- **Outcome:** A stronger alignment between national programmes and local needs, leading to better-targeted employment support for Brent residents. Success will be measured by increased participation in government-backed employment schemes and enhanced access to funding and resources.

### **6.5 Conclusion**

By focusing on these strategic objectives and their associated outcomes, the Employment Strategy will create a more inclusive, dynamic, and resilient workforce in Brent. The strategy aims to provide tailored support for residents at various stages of their careers, ensuring that everyone, from young people to disadvantaged groups and older workers, has equal access to the skills, resources, and opportunities necessary to succeed in the local labour market. This holistic approach aims to strengthen the borough's economy, reduce inequalities, and prepare residents for the jobs of the future, contributing to a more prosperous and sustainable Brent.

## **7.0 Next Steps**

7.1 Current KPI's which, will act as a starting point for development include the following:

- Total job outcomes
- Total apprenticeship outcomes
- Percentage of jobs delivered paying London Living Wage and above
- Numbers of apprenticeship and job outcomes in growth sectors
- Number of SEND Interns completing the academic year

7.2 All the above to also include detailed demographic breakdowns to ensure equality of outcomes across the service, with numbers to be determined annually taking into account the targets and priorities set by our funders.



7.3 Successful implementation of this developing strategy will require close partnership working across a full range of organisations.

7.4 Key partners include:

- The West London Alliance
- The DWP /Jobcentre Plus
- Young Brent Foundation/Flourishing Futures
- Local community and voluntary organisations
- United Colleges Group
- Local businesses

7.5 The strategy will be accompanied by an annual Action Plan, which will set out the actions to be undertaken in pursuit of the outcomes for each strategic objective, the lead partner and the expected milestones.

7.6 It is proposed that this will be overseen through a new Brent Employment Partnership with membership held by lead delivery partners and facilitated by the Council. In addition, the Employment team will facilitate bi-annual employment forum for providers, which at a practical level, will bring together all organisations who are working to deliver employment, provision across the Borough to ensure proactive collaboration.

7.7 Over the lifetime of the strategy there are likely to be opportunities to secure additional funding in pursuit of the objectives and outcomes. The Council will continue to facilitate dialogue amongst the delivery partners to ensure that additional funding is maximised in line with the core priorities set out in this document

## **8.0 Financial Considerations**

8.1 Brent Works is funded via external sources. Failure to secure future external funding may result in a loss of staffing, thus adversely impacting upon the delivery of these services. The cost of running the Brent Works team is currently £385,000 per annum. This supports 1 Brent Works manager, 1 Employment Project Manager for S106 and 4 Employment and Apprenticeship Officers.

8.2 In 2021 an 'Employment, Skills and Training Financial Contribution' was adopted in the Supplementary Planning Document as a Section 106 obligation. This leverages financial support from regeneration within the borough, using a formula based on the size and end-use of the development and is specifically used towards running employment and training initiatives for local people.

8.3 To date, this financial contribution has generated approximately £650,000. There is flexibility in when this is spent (normally within 10 years of being received) which is invaluable to supplement the gaps in funding for the Brent Works team and ensures longevity of the service.

8.4 Funding for the 25/26 financial year is currently unknown. The UKSPF funding will continue for another year at a reduced rate but as yet, we have not had confirmation of how much we will be awarded to deliver employment initiatives.

8.5 Due to the short-term funding opportunities, it is vital to have the financial resources to ensure a stable service for our residents. Retaining the flexibility in the S106 funding received has been paramount in ensuring the longevity of the service and is reflective of any gaps in funding to finance the Brent Works team.

8.6 The current funding from the Mayor of London Skills Bootcamps is unknown beyond March 2025. We are awaiting confirmation from the GLA whether we will be awarded additional grant funding to continue delivery of this successful training programme.

## **9.0 Legal Considerations**

9.1 Progression with seeking employment financial contributions via S106 obligations will be subject to any government reforms of the national planning policy.

## **10.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

10.1 This strategy will ensure access to all and will widen the scope of support available to residents who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

## **11.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

11.1 Supports the council's environmental strategy by growing the skills needed for the Green and circular economy, helping businesses recruit into green jobs and supporting residents to gain employment in the green sector and into greener jobs.

11.2 Through the partnership between the Council and the College of Northwest London, the Green Skills Centre aims to equip trainees and apprentices with industry-relevant expertise to meet the growing demand for green jobs. Training is focused on key sustainable and energy-efficiency areas including Solar panel installation and maintenance; EV charging point installation and retrofitting building to improve energy efficiency.

11.3 For academic year 2023 – 24, the centre has supported 1179 students on various courses of which 88 left the course before completing the qualification, giving a retention figure of 92.4%. The completion data is not available as this needs to be validated by the GLA once the final Individualised learner record (ILR) is submitted. The final achievement and progression data is yet to be shared with the council.

11.4 In addition, enrolments to specific new Green Skills related qualifications is as follows:

- L3 EV charging in year 23/24 - 19 (all 19+ learners)

- Low Thermal heating systems - 23/24 (48 learners)
- Air Source Heat Pumps 23/24 (all 19+ 16 learners)
- 18<sup>th</sup> Edition (19+ 22 learners)
- WRAS (19+ 8 Learners) - Water Regulations Training Course

11.5 By expanding access to these skills, the initiative helps businesses recruit into green jobs and supports residents in securing higher-technical-level employment within the green sector. This not only contributes to local economic growth but also aligns with the Council's climate emergency strategy by promoting a workforce capable of implementing sustainable solutions.

## 12.0 Communication Considerations

12.1 The strategy has and will be widely consulted upon with draft strategy communicated to stakeholders for further input and will have a formal launch upon completion with a communications strategy.

**Report sign off:**

**Alice Lester**

Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods & Regeneration