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|  | Cabinet 16 June 2025 |
| | Report from the Chief Executive |
| | Lead Member - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Councillor Mili Patel) |
| Delivering Brent's 2024-2028 EDI Ambitions: One Year On | |

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| Wards Affected: | All |
| Key or Non-Key Decision: | Non-Key |
| Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small> | Open |
| List of Appendices: | Three Appendix A: Year 1 EDI Strategy Updates by Commitment Appendix B: Anti-Racism Action Plan Updates Appendix C: Draft Infographic highlighting Year 1 achievements |
| Background Papers: | 2024-2028 EDI Strategy, Anti-Racism Action Plan |
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1.0. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In the first year of our 2024-2028 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy, we have taken important steps to make Brent a more inclusive, fair, and connected borough. From improving how we train staff to listen and act inclusively, to launching new services and adapting existing ones to better support residents' different needs, we have begun turning commitments into meaningful change. This Year 1 update on how the council is delivering its EDI strategy, Anti-Racism Action Plan and four EDI Board priorities making clear

the actions taken, what challenges remain, and what comes next. We are clear that there is much more to be done, we are not complacent, and we remain committed to tackling inequities and supporting individuals and families to reach their full potential. It is at the heart of our vision to move Brent forward together and ensure no one is left behind.

- 1.2 This report also helps to fulfil the council's obligation under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish annual information demonstrating how we are complying with the equality duty.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1. Endorse the progress made in Year 1 of the EDI Strategy 2024-2028, Anti-Racism Action Plan, and EDI Board priorities.
- 2.2 Agree that information in this report be turned into public-facing communications materials highlighting Year 1 achievements.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

- 3.1.1 This report highlights the progress made toward delivering the EDI Strategy, Anti-Racism Action Plan, and the EDI Board's Year 1 priorities. It reflects our commitment to building a fairer, more inclusive borough—where services are accessible, disparities are addressed, and our workforce reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. Over the strategy's first year, there has been meaningful progress toward EDI commitments across services, workforce, and community engagement, helping to embed inclusive practices and reduce inequality of outcomes.
- 3.1.2 Highlights from Year 1 of the strategy include the launch of the Community Wellbeing Hub at New Horizons, bringing together housing, health, and wellbeing services under one roof; the successful accreditation of 19 venues under the Dementia Friendly Venues Charter; and the delivery of over 37,000 books to vulnerable residents through the Home Libraries and Outreach Service. The Brent Schools' Race Equality Programme has engaged 51 schools to tackle disproportionality in education, while nearly 1,000 digital devices have been distributed to residents facing digital exclusion. Internally, the council has introduced mandatory anti-racism training, relaunched staff networks, and reduced the gender pay gap. These achievements reflect Brent's commitment to building a fairer, more inclusive borough—one where services are accessible, communities are empowered, and our workforce reflects the diversity of the people we serve.
- 3.1.3 As we move into Year 2, we remain focused on embedding equity into everything we do, ensuring that our policies, partnerships, and practices continue to deliver meaningful change for all Brent residents. This is reflected

in our new organisational values which we launched earlier this year: Lead Inclusively; Collaborate Proactively; Embrace Change; Be Bold and Curious; and Celebrate and Share our Success. The new values enable us to build a more connected, dynamic organisation where everyone can thrive.

3.1.4 Brent's EDI Strategy 2024–2028 is a key enabler of the Borough Plan's ambitions, ensuring that Brent is a borough where everyone can thrive, contribute, and feel they belong. The council's EDI Strategy helps to ensure that we achieve the ambitions of the Borough Plan by delivering high-quality, effective, and inclusive services to residents, having a workforce that reflects our diverse population, and ensuring that residents and employees can achieve their potential and make a positive contribution to Brent.

3.2 Background

Context

3.2.1 The Corporate EDI Board was set up in March 2024 to provide leadership and oversight for the council's EDI work. It meets every three months and is chaired by the Chief Executive. The Board oversees delivery of the EDI Strategy, the Anti-Racism Action Plan and the Black Community Action Plan (BCAP), as well as its own Year 1 priorities.

3.2.2 The sections below describe the progress made and the activities underway to deliver our EDI ambitions in both the Board and Strategy's first year, with a focus on impact. These sections are supplemented by appendices which provide detail on the various activities underway as part of each commitment:

- Appendix A – EDI Strategy updates;
- Appendix B – Anti-Racism Action Plan updates.

EDI Strategy Updates:

3.2.3 The council's [2024-2028 EDI Strategy](#) was adopted in April 2024 and lays out how we will foster a borough in which all residents feel valued and have equitable access to opportunities. The strategy has an overarching focus on promoting inclusivity, through three objectives:

- Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion
- Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities
- Establishing an Inclusive Workforce

Objective 1 – Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion

3.2.4 This objective aims to ensure that all council services are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of Brent's communities. Examples of key progress include:

- **Integrated Service Delivery:** The launch of the Community Wellbeing Hub at the New Horizons Centre in December 2024 marked a milestone in improving accessibility and service coordination. By housing the Community Wellbeing Service, Brent Hubs, Housing Options, and a Day

Centre in one location, Brent has enhanced its support provision for vulnerable residents.

- **Inclusive engagement:** The resident-led forum Brent Care Journeys 2.0 saw care-experienced young people successfully advocate for care experience to be recognised as a protected characteristic, resulting in a Full Council motion passing unopposed in November 2024. Similarly, engagement with the Brazilian community led to the formation of the first constituted Brazilian group in the borough, amplifying the voice of a previously seldom-heard community.
- **Literacy and Accessibility:** The Home Libraries and Outreach Services have supported socially isolated and vulnerable residents, issuing over 37,000 books to care homes, nurseries, and schools while maintaining monthly book deliveries to 121 readers with volunteer support.
- **Dementia-Friendly Venue Certification:** In line with the council's aspiration for Brent to be an age-friendly community, we have successfully accredited 19 venues under the Dementia Friendly Venues Charter (DFVC). This includes six libraries, two sports centres, two Day Centres, eight Family Wellbeing Centres, and the Brent Civic Centre. Work is being undertaken with managers in remaining sites to take the necessary steps toward accreditation, increasing the accessibility of Brent's venues across the borough.

3.2.5 While we have made steps in the right direction, challenges remain in encouraging broader participation and measuring the long-term impact of these initiatives. Although accessibility services have seen increased usage, there is still a need to enhance promotion and ensure that frontline staff are fully equipped to direct residents to these resources. In addition, while community forums have strengthened engagement, further steps need to be taken to increase attendance and ensure that the voices of seldom heard communities are adequately represented.

Objective 2 – Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities

3.2.6 This objective focuses on identifying and addressing challenges experienced by different groups. Key initiatives include:

- **Improving our practice:** The newly launched Brent Schools' Race Equality Programme has seen 51 schools sign up to embed anti-racist policies, reduce exclusions, and improve attainment for underperforming ethnic groups. Additionally, mentoring and pastoral support for students at risk of exclusion has contributed to a reduction in disproportionate disciplinary measures. Furthermore, to support vulnerable groups, Brent Libraries have expanded literacy and cultural engagement programmes, including initiatives for refugees and people with dementia.
- **Digital Inclusion:** Brent has provided 978 digital devices, including laptops, tablets, and mobile phones, to residents in need. Broadband

infrastructure has also been upgraded in 23 commercial council properties, improving connectivity for those facing digital exclusion.

- **Employment and Skills:** Brent Works and Brent Start have provided employability support, with 39 residents with health conditions accessing employment services and 396 residents benefiting from digital skills courses.

3.2.7 Areas to continue to build on include completing the planned EIA refresh to improve the quality and overall completion rate of EIAs, as well as to see how we can better use them to assess cumulative impact and identify any commonalities across them. The pilot of the Integrated Neighbourhood Team approach in Harlesden will also be closely evaluated to determine whether it can be expanded to additional areas, embedding a person-centred approach in the council's service delivery.

Objective 3 – Establishing an Inclusive Workforce

3.2.8 Brent council is committed to growing a workforce that is both diverse and inclusive. The past year has seen advancements in learning and development, recruitment, and staff support:

- **Embedding Anti-Racism in Training:** Following a review of the council's existing EDI training package, from April 2025, all staff will undertake mandatory Anti-Racism and Inclusive Workplace training through a train-the-trainer model in collaboration with staff networks and Equity Champions.
- **Equitable Recruitment and Pay Practices:** The council has introduced Inclusive Recruitment Training for all managers and launched a competency framework pilot for value-based hiring and promotions. A review of recruitment disparities, particularly for Asian candidates at HAY-grade positions, is underway.
- **Staff Networks and Equity Champions:** The relaunch of staff networks in February 2025 has resulted in increased participation, with the introduction of an Early Careers and a Multi-Faith Network. Additionally, 15 employees have been appointed Equity Champions, ensuring representation in EDI decision-making.
- **Reducing Pay Disparities:** The council has made progress towards closing the gender pay gap, reducing the mean gap from 6% to 4.5% and the median gap from 8.8% to 4.4%.
- **Hard-to-reach and emerging communities:** Brent vacancies are advertised on Brent Works website to target hard-to-reach communities. Additional local promotion channels include a quarterly feature in Your Brent magazine and participation in the Wembley Job Fair (July 2025) with Brent Works. Our graduate scheme prioritises applications from Brent

residents—including care leavers and those educated locally—to ensure increased access for underrepresented groups.

3.2.9 Challenges remaining include improving the collection of data on SEND and care leaver work experience placements. Similarly, creating metrics to assess the impact of the newly appointed Equity Champions and refreshed staff networks will be key to informing the overall direction and strategy. Further work is also needed around recruitment, where this year's data highlighted a significant drop in the proportion of Asian candidates offered HAY-grade positions compared to those who applied. This finding has led to investigation into possible barriers in hiring, with insights in development to help improve recruitment practices. Lastly, while we have made progress toward closing the gender pay gap, both the disability and ethnicity mean pay gaps have grown in the last year, from 1.8% to 2.3%, and from 12.9% to 14.1% respectively. Further data analysis is underway to better understand the causes of these increases, and target ways to address them.

Anti-Racism Action Plan Updates:

3.2.10 The council's [Anti-Racism Action Plan](#) is a component and delivery strand of the EDI Strategy, spanning the same duration. The action plan set a new level of ambition for Brent: becoming an Anti-Racist organisation.

3.2.11 Good progress has been made in the Action Plan's first year. EDI training has been refreshed with new modules, and mandatory in-person training on Anti-Racism and Inclusive Workplaces being implemented, alongside mandatory management training on inclusive recruitment. Efforts to reduce recruitment bias are underway, with data analysis guiding actions to address disparities, particularly at senior levels.

3.2.12 Further work is being done across the employee lifecycle, with data deep dives identifying gaps between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and their counterparts, and actions being put in place to address these disparities. While there is still work to be done, key areas have been identified over the past year, and significant steps are being taken to implement impactful change, as described in further detail in Appendix B.

EDI Board Year 1 Priorities Updates:

3.2.13 In its first year, the EDI Board focused on four main priorities to help drive forward the EDI Strategy and Anti-Racism Action Plan. These priorities were chosen because of their focus on long-term cultural and organisational change. Below is a summary of what each priority involved and the progress we have made.

Consolidating the Black Community Action Plan (BCAP)

3.2.14 Following a governance review and community feedback which highlighted issues with ownership, representation, and delivery, a revised BCAP has been developed, which includes new workstreams, governance structures, and an

updated timeline. A public refresh session in November 2024 re-engaged over 80 stakeholders and led to a co-designed action plan. The updated BCAP will be delivered over an extended period to 2033, with a focused four-year phase (2025–2029) prioritising five key themes identified as most important to stakeholders: early intervention for children and young people; tackling health inequalities; developing community-led spaces; addressing homelessness and housing; and supporting employment and enterprise.

3.2.15 To support delivery, a new Independent Advisory Steering Group (IASG) is being proposed, and will be the subject of a report to the Council's Cabinet meeting in June 2025, which will bring together community expertise and council representation to guide implementation, attract funding, and ensure transparency. A stocktake of current council provision has identified that around 40% of the revised plan aligns with existing workstreams, while the remaining 60% will require new partnerships and investment. The IASG will help bridge these gaps and ensure the community's voice remains central. The BCAP continues to be a cornerstone of Brent's commitment to tackling systemic racism and advancing equity for Black communities across the borough.

Improving Information Sharing and our Data-Driven Approach to EDI

3.2.16 This priority area focuses on how we collect, use, and share EDI data, and was broken down into two parts. Part 1, the internal EDI monitoring dashboard, was presented to the EDI Board in September 2024, and is now used to measure quarterly performance toward actions contained in the EDI Strategy and Anti-Racism Action Plan.

3.2.17 Part 2 was presented in March 2025, and identified challenges and opportunities related to EDI data capture, quality and use following a survey and meetings with colleagues across the council. This established three key workstreams: understanding EDI data, improving EDI data quality and consistency, and enhancing EDI data sharing; and led to three recommendations, which were approved by the Board. They were: adopt new methods to encourage data sharing from residents and staff; develop best practice guidance and education on EDI data collection; and, develop centralised community profile cards to display high-level intersectional data. Moving forward, these recommendations will help the council take a more joined-up and informed approach to EDI.

Improving our Organisational EDI Learning and Development Offer

3.2.18 This priority area led to the identification of gaps in our learning and development offer around accessibility, accountability, and engagement. We have since developed a refreshed EDI learning and development framework. This includes mandatory anti-racism and inclusive recruitment training, tailored EDI courses, and the expansion of informal learning opportunities, such as manager-led bite-sized training sessions.

3.2.19 To improve accountability, training completion will be tracked, and managers will be responsible for making sure their teams complete mandatory training.

An internal campaign is being launched to promote the new offer using staff networks and council communications. HR will also collect feedback to keep improving training content. An update will be brought back to the EDI Board in September 2025.

Refreshing our Approach to Equality Impact Assessments

3.2.20 The EDI Board will receive a paper in June 2025 with proposals to improve the council's approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). It includes a revised template and updated guidance. Changes have been made based on an assessment of our current approach and good practice from other councils. The refresh will result in better use of data to understand impact, clearer expectations around when and how EIAs should be used, a new review framework, and the inclusion of two new internally recognised protected characteristics: care experience and socio-economic status. The refresh also proposes the creation of an online repository to host EIAs, which will allow for improved cumulative analysis of impacts and the identification of commonalities across them. The aim is to make EIAs more useful and consistent across the organisation.

Next steps

3.2.21 Cabinet is asked to endorse progress made toward commitments within the EDI Strategy 2024-2028, Anti-Racism Action Plan, and Year 1 EDI Board priorities.

3.2.22 The EDI Board will continue to drive progress on each of the council's EDI commitments, and present Cabinet with another annual update in Spring 2026.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 As this is an update report, no stakeholders or ward member consultations or engagements took place.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no financial implications of this update report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 As a local authority we are under a general duty of best value to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The EDI strategy and supporting documents are one way in which the council can demonstrate that it is achieving this requirement and reviewing progress ensures we are continuously assessing and improving on the delivery of our functions.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The council also passed a motion on November 18th, 2024, to internally recognise care experience as a protected characteristic.
- 7.2 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 7.3 This Year 1 progress update demonstrates the council’s continued commitment to embedding EDI across its operations. The first year of the EDI Strategy 2024-2028 has delivered meaningful improvements across its three key objectives: Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion; Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities; and Establishing an Inclusive Workforce. The Anti-Racism Action Plan has also made progress, with mandatory anti-racism and inclusive workplace training set to launch in April 2025. The integration of Brent’s new values into council operations will help ensure that inclusion, collaboration, and innovation remain central to decision-making. Challenges remain in broadening participation in EDI initiatives, improving workforce diversity at senior levels, and streamlining the collection and analysis of EDI data.
- 7.4 The EDI Board will continue to drive forward the council’s EDI agenda, with a focus on accountability, improving data quality and usage, and consistent community engagement.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 9.1 There are no Human Resources/Property Considerations

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 Communications materials highlighting key achievements from the EDI Strategy and Anti-Racism Action Plan’s first year are being developed and will be promoted along with related messaging to staff via internal channels. External communications will be developed based on feedback from Cabinet and communications colleagues.

Report sign off:

Kim Wright
Chief Executive