

# Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment: Budget Proposals 2026/27

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this equality impact 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, Brent council has formally committed to treating both care experience and socio-economic status as internally recognised protected characteristics, as recognised in our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) template, and screening.

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 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. As such, the budget savings proposals have been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment 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 that are reviewed every 6 months, so that as projects/proposals develop and further evidence of impacts becomes available these are documented, along with progress toward actions listed in the EIA's action plan.

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

Relevant leads for the budget savings proposals requiring an EIA were provided with guidance and information on the practical steps to fill out the template and were supported by the EDI team to complete the assessment.

This document provides an analysis of the equality impacts for the 2026-27 budget proposals as we currently understand them, but due to the nature of six cross-cutting thematic budget proposals which are still being finalised, we are not yet able to determine an overall cumulative impact. As initiatives within each of the cross-cutting proposals progress, they will be subject to screening and EIAs will be completed for those with any impacts on protected groups. We will complete a cumulative impact assessment covering the cross-cutting thematic areas to present to Cabinet in July 2026.

At this stage, two proposals have been identified as requiring a full EIA, which are attached. The equality impacts concerned with these proposals are summarised in this report.

## **Overall Assessment**

No direct discrimination has been identified in relation to the budget proposals. Two of the savings proposals may have a negative impact on equality of opportunity, particularly for residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage; however, proportionate mitigation measures have been identified. Overall, the proposals are considered reasonable and demonstrate due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

This is an interim assessment based on the information currently available. Several proposals are still in development, and full equality impacts cannot yet be determined. Impacts will be monitored throughout implementation, and further assessment will be undertaken as proposals progress.

## **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 353,000 residents and is the fifth largest borough in London.

- The borough has a population density of 8,164 people per square kilometre – the 14th highest density in England, and the highest in Outer London.
- Brent has high levels of population mobility: During 2023-24, 50,200 people moved into the borough and 48,300 residents moved out. This equates to a population turnover rate of 279 per 1000 population, the 17th 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.
- While Brent sees very significant numbers moving in and out of the borough every year, in the past, these flows have often cancelled each other out, resulting in quite small changes in the overall population due to net migration. However, post-pandemic, migration flows have begun to rise again and net migration to Brent has turned positive, with a rise of +6,600 during 2022-24.
- Estimates suggest that the Brent population fell by around 8,200 between mid-2019 and mid-2021 (-2.4%), mainly reflecting pandemic impacts on migration flows into London. Since then, the population has recovered and has been rising. Between mid-2021 and mid-2024, the Brent population rose by around 13,700, a rise of 4%. London and England saw similar rises of 3.2% and 3.7% over the same period. The population of Brent grew by 7% over the last ten years (2014-24), similar to the rise across London (6.3%) and England (7.8%).
- The latest projections for Brent suggest strong population growth going forward. The population is projected to grow between 24%-30% over the period 2024-2041, with the 'central' scenario predicting that the population will grow by around 26%, with the population expected to reach around 452,000 by 2041. If realised, this would lead to an additional 94,600 residents by 2041 – around 5,600 additional residents per year.
- In line with national trends, the population is ageing: by 2041, the number of residents aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 57% – an additional 24,400 older residents. More than half this increase is within the age 75+ age group. Over the same period, the child population aged under 16 is expected to see less change, increasing by 14% between 2024 and 2041. The population aged 16-64 is expected to grow by around 25% by 2041.
- 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 44,600 residents by 2041 (47% 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 34.9, similar to London (35.7), but over five years lower than the national trend (40.2). 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 (26% vs. 20%), while 29% of the borough population is aged 50 or over compared with 38% nationally.

## **Care Experience**

- According to the Brent Looked After Children Annual report 2024/2025, 328 children and young people were looked after by Brent at the end of March 2025, down from 368 the previous year. 59% of Brent's looked-after cohort are school-age (5-16), while 24% are over 16, and 17% are under 5.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children remain a significant subgroup, averaging around 50 cases at any one time, making up approximately 14% of Brent's looked-after population.

## **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 1,750 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 the national average. During 2024, there were 4,445 births in Brent – which equates to a general fertility rate of 53.2 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, higher than the rate across London (48.7) and England (49.0). However, in line with national trends, the birth rate has been falling: in Brent, the general fertility rate dropped from 64.3 to 53.2 between 2014 and 2024. Similar trends are evident across London and England.

## **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: 60% 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%).

## **Socio-Economic Status**

- Brent has a poverty rate of 33%, the seventh highest in London. This indicator presents the percentage of people living in poverty (Trust for London, 2023/24).
- Brent has become relatively more deprived compared to 2019, according to the latest [Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) 2025 analysis. The overall pattern of deprivation is concentrated in Stonebridge, Roundwood, Harlesden, Kensal Green, Dollis Hill, and Welsh Harp.

### 3 IMPACT OF SAVING PROPOSALS

#### Summary 26/27 budget proposals

Although initial equality screenings have been undertaken to determine impact in terms of the PSED, some of the proposals are in their formative stages and are still to be developed or are subject to consultations. In particular, cross-cutting proposals, which are identified below, have not been assessed at this point because they span multiple services and business cases for individual initiatives within them are still being developed. Consequently, as the proposals are developed, EIA screening will be undertaken for each initiative to assess whether there any equality impacts. Overall, the majority of proposals that have been reviewed consist of utilising vacant roles, and delivering services with a stronger focus on income generation.

Where a full EIA has been carried out, this is noted next to the proposal.

#### The proposals are:

##### ***Cross-cutting Proposals, specific initiatives will be screened as they are developed:***

***CC01 Commissioning and Procurement:*** Brings together four savings proposals that aim to reduce commissioning and procurement spend through: direct supplier engagement / contract management; reduction of spend on low value (under £25k) contracts; the consideration of a management overhead charge on applicable grants; the introduction of stretch targets through the existing Fast Track payments initiative. The programme will be aligned to the Procurement Improvement Programme (PIP).

***CC02 Digital Programme:*** Supports council-wide digital transformation focused on unlocking productivity, automating low-value tasks and maximising return on previous technology investments. It brings together three key strands – Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) optimisation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) deployment, and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) expansion - to drive efficiency, reduce manual workloads, improve productivity, and build a more agile organisation.

*CC03 Service Efficiency:* Sets a standardised 1% efficiency target across the council's controllable budget. The proposal promotes a shift from centralised budget control to a more service-led approach to identifying efficiencies. Services will assess core activities to identify low-value areas for simplification, cessation, or redesign. This includes reviewing spending patterns, minimising inefficiencies and duplication, and embedding value-for-money principles across all decision-making.

*CC04 Workforce Model:* Supports the council's ambition to modernise its operating model by establishing a leaner, more agile workforce. It aims to address inefficiencies embedded in legacy staffing models, particularly in management structures, administrative functions, agency usage, and vacancy control. This programme forms part of a wider organisational development strategy and offers a major opportunity to reduce cost while improving responsiveness, accountability, and staff deployment.

*CC05 Income Maximisation:* Sets out a focused programme to increase and safeguard income through targeted updates to fees and charges, stronger recovery processes, improved payment oversight, and higher collection performance. By updating pricing strategies, enforcing permitted charges, and strengthening post-payment controls, the council can generate significant additional revenue while ensuring that public funds are protected and used efficiently.

*CC06 Resident Experience Channel Shift:* This proposal aims to enhance the overall customer experience while reducing the cost of handling interactions. It focuses on three key areas: promoting channel shift by improving online services to make digital self-service the preferred option; reducing failure demand through process redesign and first-time resolution; and creating a strategic, consistent 'front door' for residents, particularly those with complex needs. These initiatives will be driven by data and customer insight and will build on existing investments in digital infrastructure, such as website re-platforming, upgraded contact centre systems, and self-service tools.

### ***Individual Proposals:***

*NR01 Lane Rental Scheme:* This proposal seeks to generate savings through the introduction of a Lane Rental Scheme, which will apply charges of up to £2,500 per day for roadworks carried out on high-traffic routes during peak hours. The scheme is designed to reduce congestion and improve network efficiency by discouraging works at critical times.

*NR02 Asset Utilisation:* This programme aims to increase net revenue by aligning off-street parking with market-aligned tariffs and the introduction of digital booking systems. It also seeks to commercialise parks assets where this is financially sustainable and consistent with public health objectives. **Full Equality Impact Assessment completed.**

*PHRS01 Subsidy Loss Reduction:* Brent currently faces significant housing benefit subsidy losses linked to non-commissioned Supported Exempt Accommodation (SEA) placements, many of which offer poor value and inadequate support for vulnerable residents. The council is exploring using a subsidiary to deliver SEA, enabling full cost recovery from DWP.

*PHRS02 Homelessness Prevention:* This proposal aims to reduce homelessness by targeting the 30% of cases caused by friends and family evictions. The approach involves using 'at risk' indicators to identify households under stress and engage proactively with tailored support, addressing issues like financial strain, conflict, or overcrowding before eviction occurs.

*PHRS03 – Housing Benefit Claim Reduction:* This proposal offers savings through efficiencies in Housing Benefit administration as caseloads reduce. Savings will be achieved through IT enhancements and automation, with no anticipated negative impact on service users due to appropriate resource levels. **Flagged for HR Equality Impact Assessment.**

*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 £12.1m 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.**

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

Two budget savings proposals completed a full EIA due to the potential impact they may have on service delivery through the change in the service being provided. Attached to this report are the supporting EIA screenings for each savings proposal as well as the full EIA (the latter of which are summarised below).

### **NR02 Asset Utilisation**

The council has undertaken a review of current off-street parking tariffs, and analysis of annual income across these sites has revealed that several Brent car parks are underperforming, indicating significant potential for growth. To address this, our parking policy is being revised, which includes proposals to increase off-street parking tariffs and explore strategic partnerships with advertising platforms such as Just Park and Your Parking Space which will form part of a pilot scheme aimed at driving greater traffic to the council's car parks.



Additionally, the council is developing a Wembley Event Day tariff, designed to offer all-day parking at a competitive and more affordable rate compared to existing Wembley Stadium car parks.

**Impact on protected groups:** An increase in fees is likely to negatively impact socio-economically disadvantaged residents, who are less likely to have disposable incomes to cover the increased off-street parking fees, which could disproportionately affect their ability to afford parking.

**Overall impact:** The overall impact is expected to be neutral, particularly as many of these car parks are currently underutilised. The pilot scheme is designed to have minimal effect on protected groups, as only a limited number of spaces per site will be included, and disabled bays will remain unchanged. To ensure fairness and mitigate potential impacts on residents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the council is exploring the introduction of a discount incentive for Brent residents, which will help maintain accessibility while supporting our revenue objectives.

### **Increase in Council Tax by 4.99% in 2026/27**

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 £12.1m 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 Brent residents who are eligible to pay Council Tax. While the increase has universal application and no particular group is targeted, the change is likely to have a negative impact on residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. These households typically have lower disposable income and are already managing multiple financial pressures. Additional financial burdens could exacerbate existing inequalities by reducing their ability to meet essential living expenses. It is also 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.

**Overall impact:** Although the overall impact has been suggested as neutral, an increase in Council tax will impact on socio-economically disadvantaged groups, as well as middle to low-income earners who are also being impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. 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.

## **4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

The two completed EIAs have identified the potential for negative impacts on socio-economically disadvantaged residents. While there are specific justifications for the negative impacts, in summary they stem from the need to make necessary financial savings because of high inflation, increased demand for services, and pressures in temporary accommodation, among other contributing factors. Corresponding mitigation activities have been identified in the case of these proposals, as documented in the EIAs and in Section 5 of this report, with the goal of minimising the impacts felt by this group.

At this stage, it is not possible to provide a full cumulative equality impact assessment of the budget proposals. Only two individual EIAs have been completed, and the cross-cutting proposals remain under development. These proposals span multiple service areas and depend on business cases that are still being finalised. As a result, the information required to understand combined impacts across protected characteristics is not yet available.

Moving forward, our approach is to maintain a live cumulative assessment that evolves as proposals are developed. Initial screening is being applied to all proposals to identify potential risks, and the EDI team will support relevant service leads to complete EIAs as necessary. A complete cumulative analysis will be completed by July 2026, aligned with the next budget update.

## **5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

In November 2025, Brent voluntarily adopted the socio-economic duty, which is reflected in our integration of socio-economic status into the updated Equality Impact Assessment screening and template. Adopting the duty means Brent now formally treats socio-economic disadvantage as equivalent to a protected characteristic in how it is assessed and addressed.

According to the [2025 English Indices of Multiple Deprivation](#), Brent's average score makes it the 41st most deprived local authority in England, with neighbourhoods like Stonebridge, Roundwood, Harlesden, Kensal Green, Dollis Hill, and Welsh Harp experiencing particularly acute disadvantage. The income deprivation affecting children index score is 58.7%, the fifth highest in the country. We are

also aware that 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.

Brent's Black Community Action Plan (BCAP) has been refreshed following consultation and now focuses on nine priorities including employment and enterprise, developing community led and managed spaces, and council workforce diversity. Delivery runs until 2033, supported by a newly appointed Independent Advisory Steering Group (IASG) to oversee progress and advise on funding. BCAP plays an important role in addressing socio-economic disadvantage by tackling structural inequalities that disproportionately affect Brent's Black communities, including barriers to employment, housing, and health outcomes, thereby supporting inclusive economic growth. The IASG will convene its first official meeting in early 2026 to agree delivery priorities and shape engagement with external partners.

Brent is delivering a range of initiatives to support residents with learning disabilities, autism, mental health conditions, and who are neurodiverse into paid employment. These include the Supported Internships programme for young people with Education, Health and Care Plans, tailored direct payments to encourage engagement and employment, and navigation services within day services in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions. The council has also appointed an Autism Coordinator within Adult Social Care to develop a community-based network focused on employment, education, and training, and is launching a Digital Skills & Employment programme funded through Neighbourhood CIL to improve access to work opportunities.

The proposal to increase Council Tax negatively impacts socio-economically disadvantaged residents, and has the potential to negatively impact on middle to low-income earners and families 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 is 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 offers an expanded range of support services, including a 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 2026, 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, one (PHRS03) was flagged as having staffing implications arising from staff restructures or service redesign. A full EIA has not yet been completed because the proposal is still at an early stage. If it progresses, a full EIA will be carried out alongside formal consultation to assess workforce impacts in detail and identify appropriate mitigations.

Where proposals have 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.

Overall, to mitigate against compulsory staff redundancies, proposals aim to 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. When the council is required to undertake compulsory redundancies, full EIAs are undertaken as part of the consultation process, as noted above for PHRS03.