

Draft

Equalities Policy

Consultation document

**‘Aiming for equal life chances in Barnet’ – ensuring
the right approach to equalities in changing times**

**Consultation ends
2 December 2013**

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Introduction

Barnet proposes to review its Equalities Policy to reflect changes to public services in the borough and changes in equalities legislation.

This draft Equalities Policy describes what Barnet Council is doing to ensure Barnet continues to be a good place to live, work and study for all and how the council's actions will build on local community strengths and assets.

The Equalities Policy is important because it describes a number of outcomes and measures that the council will monitor to ensure it delivers improvements for all Barnet residents and reduce the impact of the challenging economic environment on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. It is necessary to update the 2010 Equalities Policy to reflect the council's commissioning approach and identify where we have shared objectives with partners. The Policy will set out clear roles for internal and external service providers (Delivery Units) and outline responsibilities for ensuring that decisions are fair.

We hope this consultation will engage local groups and residents in a continuing dialogue about equalities and community cohesion in Barnet.

Please take the time to read this consultation document. It includes the proposed approach to equalities as well as statements about Barnet's approach to community cohesion. Please share your views by completing the survey online at engage.barnet.gov.uk. Alternatively please share your views by completing the following Draft Equalities policy survey and returning it in the freepost envelope provided. If you are printing at home or in a library you can post your questionnaire to:

Equalities Officer
Policy Unit, Commissioning Group
London Borough of Barnet
North London Business Park
Oakleigh Road South
London N11 1NP

We will bring together all the feedback we receive from face to face meetings and the survey responses to inform the final version. This will then be considered by elected Members in December.

**The consultation period will run until
5pm on 2 December 2013**

Section 1: Background

Our Equalities Policy sets out our commitment to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity across the borough.

Why do we need an Equalities Policy?

Barnet is growing and becoming more diverse; growth is particularly in younger and older generations. Barnet will continue to grow and change over the next 15 years as development drives growth and changes in regeneration areas. In an era of unprecedented financial challenges the Local Authority's 2013 Corporate Plan puts a clear emphasis on creating the right environment for fair economic growth across the borough. Alongside growth the Plan describes the continuing need to support families and individuals who need it, whilst doing more to promote independence. Barnet has always been a place where diverse communities have got on well together and this is something we can all be proud of. As the borough continues to diversify, we need to ensure this continues.

Barnet's Equalities Policy is important because it describes a number of outcomes and measures that the council will monitor to ensure it delivers improvements for residents, and mitigates the impact of the challenging economic environment on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Significantly, some of these measures go beyond traditional public services and highlight what Barnet residents value and consider to improve their quality of life. This includes making work rewarding, building community capacity and promoting a fair economy.



What has changed since the last Equalities Policy was published in 2010?

Since the 2010 Policy, the legislative landscape has changed. The Equality Act came into force in 2011, replacing strand specific equality legislation. The Local Authority and Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group both publish specific and measurable equality objectives as required under the Public Sector Equality Duty. We need to work with service users, residents and employees, particularly those with protected characteristics, to make sure that equality and fairness is part of everyday business and local partners gather evidence for better decision making.

The council and local partners have gone through a period of change in response to challenging times. The council has transitioned to a 'Commissioning Council' model, using a mixed economy to provide services which secure the best value for the taxpayer. Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group and local clinicians are defining their priorities, working closely with patients. In the future, equalities objectives will be delivered through new service partnerships and the Equalities Policy needs to reflect this.

The changes across public services provide an opportunity to update the 2010 Policy so that it reflects the new commissioning approach and identifies shared objectives across the council and its local partners. This will set out clear roles and responsibilities for internal and external service providers (Delivery Units), and outline responsibilities for ensuring that decisions are fair.

How will we use the consultation period?

We value your feedback. We hope this document starts a conversation with Barnet's communities. We welcome your views on our responsibilities to promote equality and also your suggestions on how to go beyond traditional services to improve quality of life more generally and promote fair growth.

We also want to use the consultation period to engage with our partners. Initial conversations have shown that we have shared challenges and we can work together to make progress to tackle inequality. We recognise that one sector alone cannot reduce inequality, grow the economy or encourage community action; the public sector must work with Barnet's communities as well as the private and community sectors. For public bodies equality isn't just about the types of services and support we provide but also how we can support people to take control of their own lives and support each other.

Section 2: Policy aims

Barnet is a successful, attractive and enterprising suburb of a world city. Residents appreciate the local character of Barnet - 88 per cent of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live. Barnet has long been home to diverse communities - 83 per cent of residents feel that different groups in the community get on well together.

Barnet's Corporate Plan recognises that growth, managed responsibly, is the key to the future prosperity of the borough. The aims of the revised Equalities Policy are therefore to:

Promote fair economic growth in times of austerity and when making difficult decisions

Ensure that Barnet's diverse communities benefit from the area's growth and success especially those who need additional help.

Mainstream equalities

Embed equality considerations in decisions that the council and our partners make so that equalities impacts are fully integrated into business and financial planning.

Work with partners to deliver better outcomes

Work with local partners including public, private, voluntary and community sectors to gather data to understand residents' needs and to develop practical solutions that tackle the drivers of inequality.

Promote diversity in the local economy

Support the development in the local economy of diverse markets, workforces and suppliers to maximise the benefits for local communities.

Promote diversity in service provision

Ensure that services are accessible.

This does not mean one size fits all. We need to understand how different types of interventions can improve equality of opportunity at different stages in people's lives.

Promote community engagement

Ensure that the council and its partners communicate and engage with all of Barnet's communities so that services are delivered in partnership with communities, responding to needs in a personalised way and building on their assets and capabilities:

- ensure that the council and its partners engage with organisations from across Barnet's diverse communities to help maintain the cohesive communities that exist in the borough
- to develop a 'Communities Together' network, with the council acting as an enabler, so that community organisations share information and aid understanding between communities to promote community cohesion.

Give us your views

The survey asks whether you agree with the aims of the Policy. It also asks for views on the equalities issues in Barnet.

Section 3: Diversity principles

When meeting the objectives of Barnet's Equalities Policy the council and partners will adhere to our diversity principles which describe how the council will work. We will:

Mainstream equality

Ensure equality considerations are integrated into decisions taken by the council and its partners.

- assess the equalities impacts as the council develops strategies, policies and programmes as part of standard decision making. Where adverse equalities impacts are identified, the council will consider how these can be mitigated.

Use customer data

Use the data and information we have to understand the needs and expectations of Barnet residents.

Work with partners to deliver better outcomes

Expect all partners to respond to the diverse nature of Barnet as part of their standard business model. This means asking them to consider how they communicate with their customers, how to make their services accessible to all and how to personalise their offer to meet individual needs without a service premium.

Promote community engagement

Make consultation and engagement with diverse communities a cornerstone of developing new equalities actions. These discussions will cover the level and scope of services and also the personal responsibility of citizens and communities to support each other.

Be open and transparent

Be open and transparent and publish all information on our progress against our objectives and ensure partners can be held to account for mutually agreed outcomes.

Give us your views

The survey asks whether you agree with the principles to be included in the policy.



Section 4: Key achievements

Since 2010 the council has made good progress with developing the building blocks of its approach to equalities through collating and analysing data, ensuring staff understand their responsibilities and improving how the council takes account of equalities impacts in decision making.

In this section, we briefly describe our key achievements and indicate how equality considerations are woven into what we do:

- over the past 10 years, Barnet has become more ethnically diverse:
 - 36% of people now identify themselves as Black or minority ethnic
 - the fastest growing population is the Asian community
 - home to the country's largest Jewish community
 - throughout these changes, Barnet has remained a place where people have positive relationships in the community.
- in June 2013, Cabinet Resources Committee agreed to apply Housing Revenue Account resources to build over 40 new family-sized and wheelchair-accessible homes over the next couple of years:
 - we have been able to do this because Central Government now gives councils greater freedom to spend housing resource as we think fit.
- in June, we also launched round three of Barnet's Big Society Innovation Bank, a scheme which aims to unlock the passion and energy of residents and the voluntary sector:
 - this year, £225,000 of grant funding is available for individuals, community groups and non-profit organisations
- with ideas for innovative projects that encourage community cohesion and develop local solutions to local challenges.
- in 2012/13, the:
 - educational achievement gap narrowed and there was improved GCSE performance by children with special educational needs
 - proportion of adult social care users taking their personal budget as a direct payment increased, supporting people with disabilities, mental health problems and learning disabilities to maximise their choice and control.
- the Learning Disability Parliament continues to engage residents in changes to the borough, for example:
 - this year they have met with architects to discuss the redevelopment of Brent Cross
 - the Barnet UK Youth Parliament Elections were held in March 2013. The turnout was fantastic with 11,800 young people aged 11-18 voting, which was 36% of the total eligible group. Successful candidates and their families and friends celebrated at a special results evening.
- there has been progress on plans for additional primary school places. We know

that Barnet is a great place to live, and this is reflected in our rapidly growing population. So, despite austerity and pressure on our budgets, the proposed financial plan for the next three years provides the additional resources to make this happen. Where appropriate developers will help us meet these costs; the £9m new school at Mill Hill being a good example.

- in February 2013, Friern Barnet Library was handed over to a new community library organisation
 - this is an excellent outcome with a library continuing to operate, and also delivering essential savings for the council to enable other front line services to continue
 - the council has committed to providing all the practical support it can to ensure that the community library is successful.
- Barnet has developed a Community Cohesion Network, working closely with a range of community organisations as well as the police and fire service, to help Barnet continue to be a cohesive community.

Give us your views

We would like to find other examples in the borough of tackling inequality and celebrating diversity. We also ask whether you have good examples of how communities have celebrated diversity.



Section 5: Equalities objectives

The council's Strategic Equalities Objective comes from its constitution and is set out in the Corporate Plan:

'Our commitment is that citizens will be treated equally, with understanding and respect; have equal opportunities with other citizens and receive quality services provided to Best Value principles'

The following equalities performance targets have been set to embed the Strategic Equalities Objective within the Corporate Plan Strategic Objectives:

1.	Promote responsible growth, development and success across the borough
1.1	Reduce the employment gap between different groups of residents including those with protected characteristics.
1.2	Increase the number of contracts with external suppliers which include conditions on employing local labour, investing in apprenticeships and creating new jobs in numbers representative of groups with protected characteristics locally.
2.	Support families and individuals who need it – promoting independence, learning and well being
2.1	Reduction of gap in life expectancy and health across the borough, analysed by protected characteristics.
2.2	100% of new builds in the borough to meet lifetime homes standards, 10% to be wheelchair accessible.
3.	Improve the satisfaction of residents and businesses with the London Borough of Barnet as a place to live, work and study
3.1	85% of residents agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Barnet (target +2% from 2012/13 baseline) analysed by protected characteristics.
3.2	47% of residents feel the council doesn't do enough for people like me analysed by protected characteristics (target is ensure this percentage does not increase).

Give us your views

The survey asks whether you think that Barnet is doing the right things and whether it has identified the right measures.

Section 6: Measuring progress with equalities

Since the publication of its 2010 Equalities Policy the council has developed Strategic Equalities Objectives and indicators.

The purpose of these measures is to provide up to date data on our progress against our aims. To view the data published to date please visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/equality-diversity

The council will produce an annual report highlighting progress towards the delivery of our equalities objective and commitments. The emphasis is on using the information to understand key issues, trends and areas requiring action.



For more information:
tel: 020 8359 7263 or email: equalities@barnet.gov.uk