

# WORK, SKILLS AND PRODUCTIVITY ACTION PLAN

2021-2025

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# OUR APPROACH

2020 was a challenging year for residents and employers in Barnet, with the pandemic and its lockdowns having far-reaching impacts on the working lives of people from every background, age group and skills level.

The pandemic also accelerated a number of existing trends, particularly in relation to technological change and the role of the internet. We've seen this in the continued move towards online retail, growth in the size and importance of the "gig" economy and other forms of temporary work and, for some, the creation of a whole new world of remote working away from traditional work locations.

**Sectors that were declining before March 2020 such as retail are expected to continue to do so, whilst other sectors such as health and care, construction, and the creative industries continue to grow at unprecedented rates. This creates new opportunities for the future that many residents who have found themselves out of work, often for the first time in their lives, will be able to benefit from.**

The scale of the employment and skills challenge creates a pressing need for us to respond in a *joined up* and *practical* way across the borough, including with our partners in the further and high education sectors, with major employers such as the NHS and Brent Cross, as well as the voluntary and community sector.

Our objective is to ensure that all Barnet residents are able to succeed in sustainable, good work that benefits them, their families, and the wider economy. This action plan outlines how we aim to achieve the following:

- **Minimising the long-term impacts** of the pandemic on workers and businesses;
- **Creating the jobs of the future** by supporting learning and work opportunities in our highest growing sectors;
- **Ensuring that young people have the best possible foundation** through targeted learning and employment opportunities;
- **Boosting economic productivity and closing the skills gap** by ensuring everyone has an opportunity to work, including those furthest from the labour market.

# BARNET'S ECONOMY

## The Challenge

Barnet is the largest borough in London by population, with 402,700 residents in 2020. It is a relatively affluent place, although there are areas with notably higher levels of poverty focused around Burnt Oak, Colindale and West Hendon. The borough is hugely diverse, with the needs of residents varying across the borough. Some are more likely to be at risk of long-term unemployment, particularly those who have a physical or learning disability, are aged 16 to 24 or over 50, are from an ethnic minority, and/or live in the west of the borough.

The borough's economy reflects its suburban character, with high levels of self-employment<sup>1</sup> and a concentration of small and micro-businesses focused on professional services, construction, and retail. The average earnings of all residents in Barnet are 25% higher than those who work within the borough, reflecting its role as home for workers in highly paid central London jobs.

These characteristics mean that Barnet's economy is relatively exposed to the short-term impacts of the pandemic. Retail is also one of the sectors that has been most impacted by wider trends in online shopping and changing consumer behaviour over the last few years, and which pre-date the pandemic.

As a result of this, the borough has seen an increase in unemployment over the last year, with 10,200 people out of work at the end of 2020<sup>2</sup>; a rate of 4.9%, which is significantly higher than the pre-pandemic level of 3.9%. This is expected to

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<sup>1</sup> 33,800 self-employed workers in 2018 (Oxford Economics, 2020)

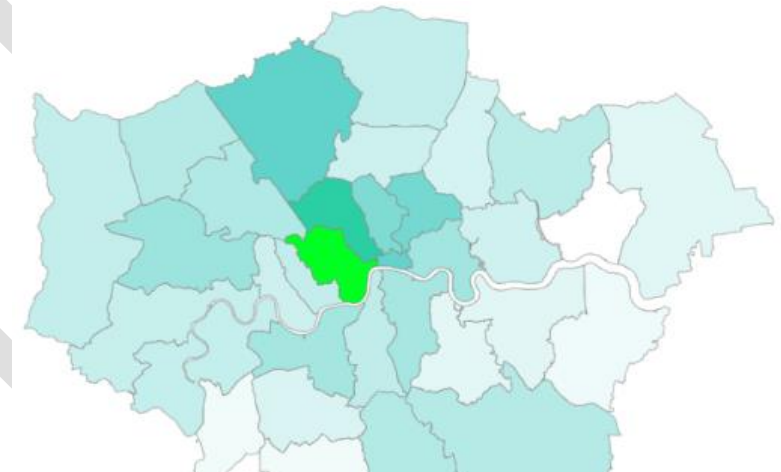
<sup>2</sup> NOMIS: [Official Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

increase further over 2021 before falling again in Barnet and nationally, as the impacts of the pandemic and wider structural changes to the economy continue to take effect.

## The Opportunity

There are a number of significant opportunities ahead of us despite this challenging climate. Whilst retail is declining for example, other sectors are growing. These include health and care, construction, and the creative industries. In the care sector alone, it is estimated that over 4,000 new jobs will be created by 2030. Across North London over 10,000 new roles are expected to be created in the health sector. Many of these will be good quality at all levels and with opportunities to learn and progress for those who secure them.

Furthermore, the regeneration at Brent Cross and more widely across the borough will create many high-quality jobs in a range of different sectors, benefitting residents and communities directly as well as through the increase in spending in the local economy that will come to local businesses.



*Barnet has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest number of enterprises in London<sup>4</sup>*

low high

**There is an opportunity to respond to and offset the impacts of the pandemic by developing new approaches to supporting work in our fastest growing sectors, benefitting not only those furthest from the labour market but also the many residents who have found themselves unemployed for the first time in their lives as a result of the pandemic.**

<sup>3</sup> [Barnet Employment & Skills Dashboard](#) (2021)

# PRINCIPLES

This plan respects the fact that there is already much work underway to support the delivery of good employment, training and learning outcomes in Barnet, and also that our current programmes will need to evolve in order to meet the challenges ahead.

The way we will deliver the programme reflects this, focusing on a more joined-up and strategic approach to boosting employment and productivity at scale. Four key principles have been developed accordingly which will be used to guide its implementation:

## Inclusive

- We want to ensure that residents from all backgrounds have the opportunity to benefit from growth through good quality work and training opportunities

## Preventative

- We recognise the relationship between good work, health and wellbeing, and the fact that supporting residents into meaningful jobs is one of the most effective prevention activities we can undertake as a local authority.

## Evidence-based

- It is important that our response to the impacts of the pandemic and wider economic change reflects real-world data and evidence about "what works" and which programmes are most effective

## In partnership

- We recognise that it is not for the council to respond alone, and that there is a diverse range of partners, including the business community, private sector and VCS, who we will need to work with to deliver the best possible outcomes for people in Barnet.

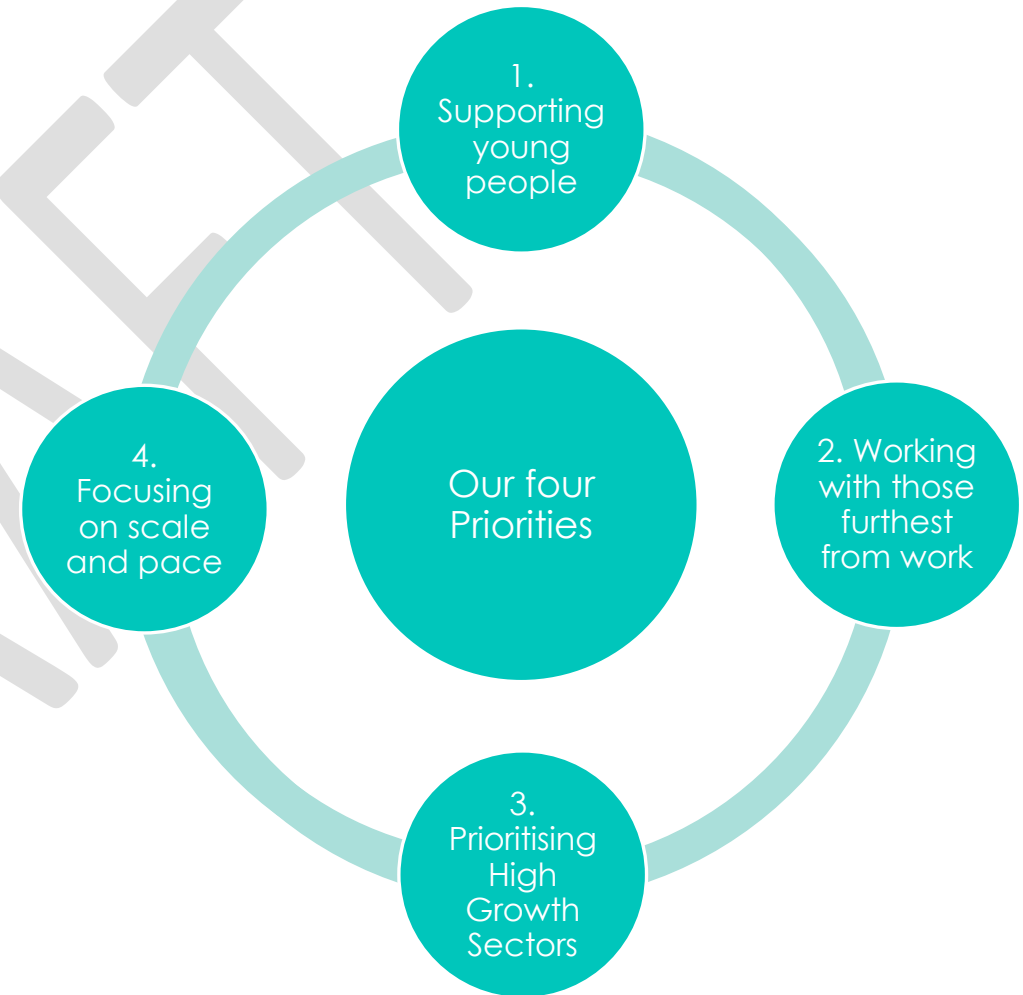
# OUR PRIORITIES

We want to enable residents from all backgrounds and communities of the borough to have access to high quality employment, learning and skills opportunities, and for this to happen at a scale that is consistent with the challenge facing us as a result of the pandemic.

This means encouraging residents into jobs and learning opportunities that have good prospects for progression within the fastest growing sectors of the economy.

We have therefore developed four key priorities with our partners, each with an associated action plan that will contribute to the realisation of this objective.

**Under each of these four priorities, the actions are split into “now” (this year), “soon” (the next 1-2 years) and “later” (2-4 years).**



# PRIORITY ONE: SUPPORTING YOUNGER PEOPLE

We know that those aged 16 to 24 are more likely to be out of work than other age groups, and that it can be a challenge for many young people to get onto a pathway to high quality employment. We will work with our partners to ensure that young people have access to the work and learning opportunities that allow them to succeed, and that we fulfil our role as a corporate parent for those in our care.

## Now

- ⑩ We will collaborate with BELS and the Post-16 team to contribute to the coordinated delivery of the post-16 strategy
- We will review approaches to Section 106-funded and other apprenticeships to ensure they are having maximum positive impact with a strong focus on 18 to 24 year olds
- ⑩ We will maximise opportunities for care leavers and further develop Routes into Construction and the Risk of NEETs projects to ensure that every NEET young person has at least one intervention or referral
- ⑩ We will identify pathways into work for NEETs and young offenders that support them into sustainable and good quality work
- ⑩ We will initiate a new programme of supported internships for those with special educational needs (SEND) with local partner organisations to support those with disabilities to find good work
- We will encourage greater collaboration between specialist youth service providers through facilitating joint funding bids to enable smoother transitions for 16 to 24 year olds
- ⑩ We will support at least 300 young people into work through the Kickstart programme, both as an employer and a convener

## Soon

- We will refresh the Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document to reflect the needs of young people and that they are supported into quality work in the construction sector.
- We will work with Barnet and Southgate College to encourage young people into work in high growth sectors
- ⑩ We will increase the capacity of the Barnet Education, Employment and Training Service (BEETS) by 50 per cent to provide intensive support to disengaged young people
- We will form new partnerships with training providers and education institutions to encourage lifelong learning
- ⑩ We will work closely with businesses to encourage them to employ and develop local young people with disabilities and special educational needs so that they can find good, sustainable work
- We will develop strengthened partnerships between schools, higher education providers and employers so that young people develop the skills that employers are looking for
- ⑩ We will lead by example through doubling the number of apprenticeships and creating a locally sourced management programme for A-level students not in university

## Later

- We will work with employers and industry led bodies to identify and promote new pathways in to work e.g. via placements, vocational training and internships.
- We will increase the number of opportunities offered to young people by making better use of our buying power and local supply chains across the Barnet Partnership.
- We will design new programmes to target specific groups of disengaged young people and to put them at the heart of the skills system
- ⑩ We will pivot the training and employment system towards the high growth sectors of the future, where the jobs that will benefit young people in the coming decades are being created.



# PRIORITY TWO: WORKING WITH THOSE FURTHEST FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

We recognise that some groups and individuals can experience greater barriers to work and learning opportunities, and that there is a clear relationship between access to employment, health, and wellbeing. Working across our partnership we will work to reduce these barriers so that residents from all backgrounds can access good work.

## Now

- We will ensure that essential training opportunities and support is available to those who need it, including to residents who have lost their job for the first time as a result of the pandemic
- We will continue to work closely with DWP and JCP to continue the successful rollout of the Work & Health programme to help at least 350 residents into work this year
- We will work with DWP and the WLA to ensure Barnet residents are able to fully access the JETS programme
- Through our BOOST programme we will support at least 300 residents into good work this year
- ⑩ We will expand our existing provision of digital skills to help break down the biggest barriers to employment
- ⑩ We will review current provision for those with learning disabilities by joining the successful "Project Search" programme.

## Soon

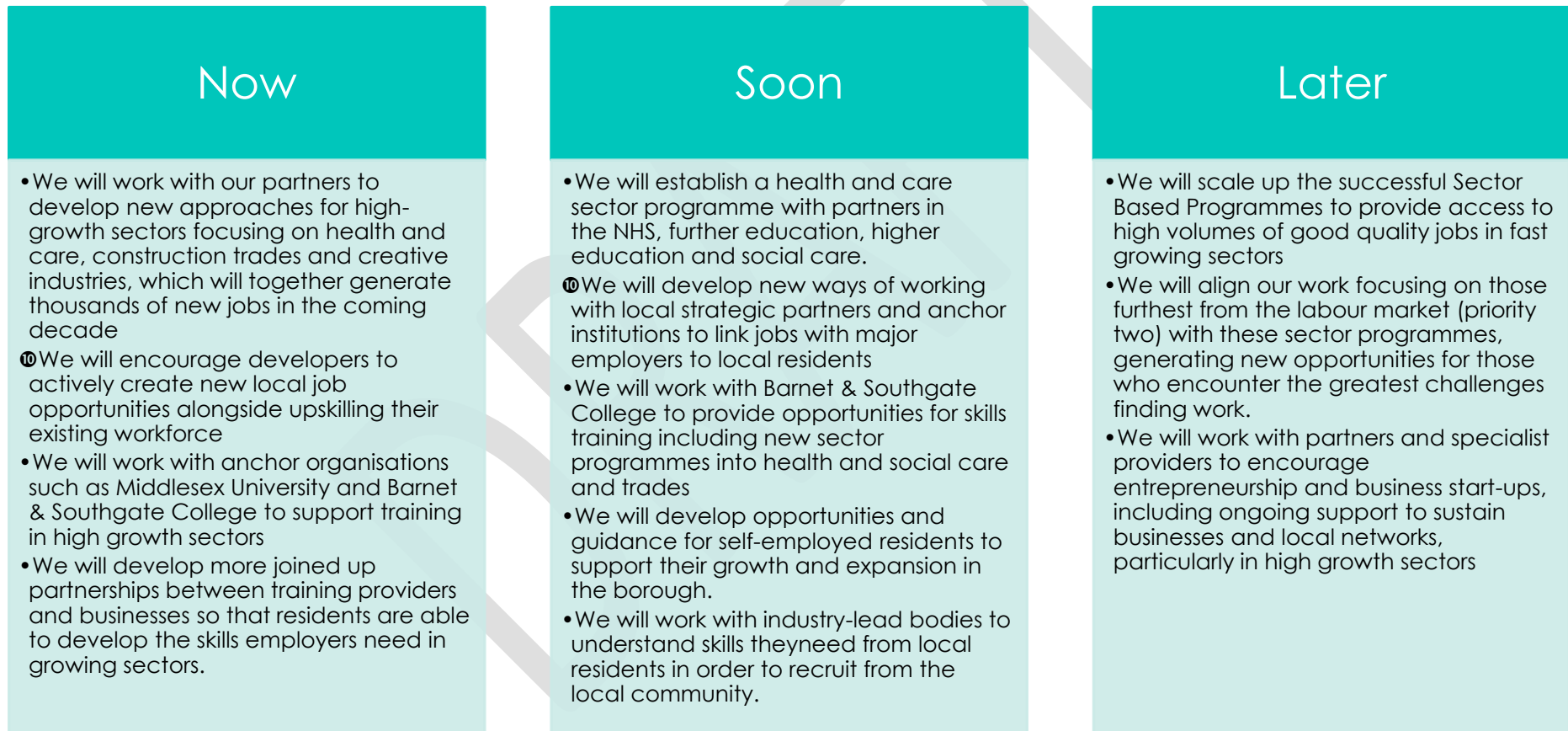
- ⑩ We will launch a "single front door" approach to employment support, financial and benefits advice through the BOOST service, in partnership with CAB.
- ⑩ We will work with the VCS to engage with those furthest from the labour market, including those with physical disabilities
- ⑩ We will work with housing associations to establish at least two local hubs in the heart of communities where the need for work is highest
- ⑩ We will expand availability of ESOL provision by at least 50 per cent so that training more closely matches need and ensure that ESOL training is linked up with BOOST provision
- ⑩ We will complete the roll out of high speed internet connections to all 13,000 Barnet Homes properties by 2023.
- ⑩ We will work to implement initiatives such as Restart to support long term unemployed residents in to work

## Later

- We will, with our partners, provide more targeted and joined-up support to long term unemployed residents who have found it harder to find work as a result of the pandemic.
- We will develop new pathways to refer those who are out of work for the longest into high quality work and training opportunities in high growth sectors
- ⑩ We will launch a job brokerage platform to encourage residents into good work and training opportunities.

# PRIORITY THREE: PRIORITISING HIGH GROWTH SECTORS

We will focus on creating new pathways into work that focus on the highest-growth sectors with the best long-term prospects for progression: health & care, construction and trades, and the creative industries.



# PRIORITY FOUR: DELIVERING AT SCALE AND PACE

The pandemic has accelerated many existing employment trends, particularly in the retail sector and for workers with lower levels of skills. This means that a focus on delivery at a faster pace and wider scale than has been the case for the last de



# IMPLEMENTATION

## **Governance**

The economy-wide nature of this plan means that delivery will be undertaken by a wide range of internal council services, and with our external delivery partners.

The plan will be underpinned by a more detailed programme, which will set out how each of the strands of activity described in the sections above will be implemented and by when.

Oversight will be undertaken in line with the governance arrangements of the various partners involved, with overall progress being reported on at least an annual basis.

## **Resourcing Delivery**

The nature of the challenge facing Barnet's labour market will require an increasingly joined up and coordinated approach from the council and its partners, who will each contribute to the delivery of this programme in a wide variety of ways. In addition to this

wider rallying and coordination of existing resource, new funding to deliver the strategy will be secured via a range of channels including from Section 106 and other developer contributions, from existing council resources where appropriate, and via external funding.

## **Communication and Engagement**

It will be crucial to clearly communicate and engage with our key stakeholders in the borough, including businesses, residents, local voluntary and community sector organisations, and major employers. This will therefore be an important part of our approach.

Doing this will ensure that all employers and learning providers understand and are able to effectively engage with the delivery of this plan, and also that residents here are able to find the information, advice, and guidance that helps them to secure the good work they will need to thrive in coming years.