

# Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021-2025



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# Foreword

We recently published our [Barnet Plan for 2021-25](#) which sets out our ambition for the next four years and aims to create an inclusive borough where nobody is left behind. We want Barnet to be a place in which everyone's hopes and aspirations can be made real.

Our diverse community is one of our greatest strengths with people of many different ethnic backgrounds, faiths and life experiences living side by side. Supporting all our communities to thrive in an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination is a core strand running through all the priorities in our Barnet Plan and fundamental to how we work as a council. We want to ensure people are not held back by poverty and that our success is shared. This Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy supports that journey.

We recognise that we can only deliver this policy by working together with all our communities. That is why we have developed this policy in consultation with our partners, staff, residents, and other key stakeholders.

We are committed to building Barnet into a strong, cohesive organisation and community where diversity is celebrated, people have equal opportunities and where inequality is actively tackled.

This policy sets out our vision for actively tackling inequalities, fostering good relationships across our communities and recognising the contributions that people from different backgrounds make to life in our borough. We are firmly committed to the Public Sector Equality Duty, and the protected characteristics of people enshrined within it. But our aspirations go further: to ensure equality of opportunity for people in care, refugees and migrants, people with caring responsibilities and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

We know that the measures we take to make the borough easier to get around, or that tackle discrimination or harassment head on, make life better for everyone.

We want the borough to be a fair, inclusive and a safe place for all our communities. Where discrimination is tackled, hate crime is reported and dealt with promptly, and everyone feels safe to live their life.

Our action plan sets out how we will deliver these ambitions. It states the high standards we expect of ourselves. It demonstrates efforts we will undertake to build an inclusive culture within our workforce and has a positive impact on the residents we serve. It shows how we will shape our services which actively address inequality and exclusion, and proactively promotes the building of good relations between different communities. It also connects to our [Barnet Plan](#) to ensure that we work with our partners to enhance equality and fairness.

This updated Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and action plan is the next step on our journey to creating an inclusive borough, which works for all.



**Councillor  
Dan Thomas**  
Leader of the Council



**John Hooton**  
Chief Executive  
of the Council



# Section 1:

## Our vision and commitment

Our vision: “Every person has unique differences. With the support of our partners, community groups and residents the council will build Barnet into a strong cohesive community, where diversity is celebrated, and everyone has equal opportunity regardless of their background. A borough where every person can live, work, play, pray and study in an inclusive and safe environment, free from harassment, discrimination and any structural inequalities that could hold them back. We want to create a community where people support each other to take control of their own lives, optimise their independence, and make a difference in their areas and local services.”

Barnet has long been a diverse borough and is becoming ever more diverse, with people of many different ethnic backgrounds, faiths, and life experiences living side by side. It is the richness of this diversity, and the positive impact that it has on the borough and our community, that we believe helps make Barnet such a great place to live, work, play, pray and visit.

We know that the borough’s diversity is something to value and celebrate, and this policy highlights our commitment to maintaining and building on our strengths by ensuring equalities, diversity and inclusion is integral to everything we do. The council continues to be committed to helping make Barnet a strong, cohesive community. We aim to reflect this in our own organisation, so that both our council and our borough are places where diversity is celebrated, people have equal opportunities and inequality is actively tackled.

### Striving to be a more inclusive organisation will help the council to:

- make decisions that are informed by diverse points of view
- know our communities better and listen to them more closely
- design, commission and deliver the most effective possible services
- make the best use of our resources.

A wealth of evidence from the public, private and voluntary sectors supports our view that greater equality and inclusion will benefit our residents, our communities, our colleagues and our partners.



## Section 2: Purpose of this policy

Our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will ensure that in all our work we are helping to make Barnet a fair borough to live, work, play, pray and study in. We will deliver this policy together in partnership with other agencies who share our values and our vision.

This commitment extends to our own workforce and is part of our responsibility as an employer. We will ensure employees at all levels can see a pathway to progression, are empowered to pursue it and are supported on that journey.

Being truly inclusive is not just about welcoming different contributions. Inclusion also means actively tackling inequalities and advancing greater equality, as well as fostering good relations between different people. Inclusion means removing the barriers – physical, economic or social – that hold people back, so we build a borough in which everyone feels a part:

- by considering equalities and inclusion in the way we operate, we ensure that decision making, and policy development is better informed and more tailored to individual needs. This will lead to better outcomes for our communities
- by celebrating and promoting diversity and inclusion, we will create a more cohesive borough, building a community in which people support each other and help tackle discrimination
- we will use insight to investigate inequality and discrimination, and to understand where people may not have equal access to services. Wherever we find that people have experienced inequality or disproportionate impact due to their characteristics we will work to tackle this and eradicate it.

### Within this policy we have set out:

- our legal obligations to protect people from discrimination and to promote equality of our residents and staff
- the underlying principles that will guide our approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion in the borough
- what we are doing to implement this approach, what we plan to do, and how we are going to make sure we are achieving it.



## Section 3: Legal duties

As a local authority Barnet Council has a number of legal obligations related to equalities, inclusion, diversity, and human rights. While it is our statutory responsibility to meet these duties, we believe that as an organisation that has such a tangible impact on people’s lives, it is important that we strive to go beyond them and challenge ourselves to constantly improve.

### Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is designed to ensure that people are protected from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. [Section 149](#) of the act contains a specific duty for local authorities: The Public Sector Equality duty ensures that we consider the needs of all individuals in shaping policy, delivering services, and managing our workforce.

#### The Equality Act lists nine protected characteristics that we must consider when assessing the impact of our services:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

#### The Public Sector Equality Duty has three aims, and requires Barnet Council to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

#### We must also:

- publish information at least annually to show how we are meeting the Equality Duty
- set and publish equality objectives at least every four years.

#### Having due regard to advancing equality means that we:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

This policy re-states our long-held commitment to tackling inequality on these grounds, not just because it’s our legal duty but also because doing so helps create a more successful borough.

We are committed to the social model of disability which says that people are disabled by barriers in society not by their impairment or difference, whether that impairment or difference is physical, mental or cognitive. Barriers can be physical, for example buildings not having accessible toilets, or they can be caused by people’s attitudes, like assuming disabled people are unable to do certain things.



## Going beyond legislation

This policy sets out our approach to meeting our legal obligations. However, we want to go further in order to fulfil our vision of a diverse and inclusive organisation and borough. We will seek to identify and eliminate structural inequality wherever it exists, including where possible, looking beyond the nine protected characteristics of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Creating a successfully inclusive borough also means recognising that there are many causes of inequality or exclusion, often interconnected and mutually reinforcing. People can be excluded because they have been uprooted from their home or country, are economically disadvantaged, face daily barriers to access have poor social networks, live in inadequate housing conditions, do not speak English, or are experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing. Refugees and migrants, those with caring responsibilities or who have been in care are also often more at risk of facing inequality or exclusion.

Issues relating to other forms of inequality or exclusion are already considered through topics, programmes and projects such as food insecurity, health and wellbeing for all, educational outcomes, access to good quality jobs, support for refugees and fostering resilient communities.

These take account of the different causes and consequences of inequality and consider the differing needs and diversity of people throughout our communities.

We will continue this approach and through our actions ensure our activities are linked to our equality and inclusion principles and objectives

## Our Commitments

We commit to fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and any other subsequent legislation relating to equality. We require our contractors and the organisations that we fund to abide by all the equality legislation that applies to them and to assist the council in upholding its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

We commit to being a learning organisation, always ready to improve our practice and to address new issues as they arise. We will seek to understand and address the root causes of inequality and exclusion in Barnet and to focus our efforts on tackling them. If we make mistakes, we will put things right and learn from our experience.



# Section 4:

## The council's Strategic Equalities Objective

The council is required to set an Strategic Equalities Objective (SEO) and publish a report on our progress in meeting it. The SEO provides our central organisational objective towards advancing equalities.

**The council's former Strategic Equalities Objective (SEO) was:**

*Citizens will be treated equally, with understanding and respect, and will have equal access to quality services.*

**The SEO was last updated in 2018. It has been revised and updated to be in line with our Barnet Plan for 2021-25 and also in consultation with our partners and residents.**

**Our new Strategic Equalities Objective (SEO) is outlined below:**

*All our communities will be treated equally, with understanding and respect. Both our council and our borough will be places where diversity is celebrated, and inequality is actively tackled; where people have equal opportunities and equal access to quality services.*



# Section 5:

## Responsibilities and governance

Everyone has a part to play in advancing equalities, diversity and inclusion in Barnet. We work with our staff, unions, partners, residents, and service users to ensure we meet our duties and ambitions for meeting the diverse needs of Barnet's population.

### Specific responsibilities within the council:

**Elected Members:** Members play a vital part in setting the council's strategic direction. They will approve the EDI Policy and ensure the council adheres to it when making decisions. Members champion equalities among the communities they serve and celebrate the diversity in their local areas.

**Council Management Team (CMT):** This is the highest strategic body of officers in the council and comprises the Chief Executive and his most senior directors. Among these are the nominated leads for equalities, who are responsible for informing the council's strategic direction in relation to equalities, and ensuring the whole organisation is working together to deliver the EDI Action Plan. The CMT equalities leads also chair the EDI Steering Group.

**EDI Steering Group:** The steering group is made up of officers from around the council and is responsible for monitoring progress in delivering the Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan. The group meets monthly and reports to CMT every quarter.

**Barnet Equality Allies (BEA) and staff diversity networks:** Barnet Equalities Allies are a network of council staff who provide advice and challenge to the organisation on equalities issues. They also facilitate staff networks, such as the Women's Network, Disability Network and Black Staff Resources and Action Group and an Anti-Racism Resource Group and a Community Informed Resource Group. These networks provide a safe space for staff to discuss concerns and plan awareness-raising events. They report into the EDI Steering Group and contribute to the EDI Action Plan.

All council officers are responsible for ensuring that we think about equalities in all that we do and how we deliver our services, and report discrimination and harassment whenever we encounter it.

### Two teams play a key role in advancing the EDI agenda:

- the **Strategy Team** lead on producing the EDI policy, action plan and annual report. They also lead on engaging residents and our voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations
- the **Human Resources Team** are responsible for promoting and embedding organisational aspects of EDI in the workforce and workplace.

### Partnership working:

The council is also committed to working in partnership with other organisations in the borough. Barnet maintains close links with other statutory services such as health, police and education; as well as commercial businesses and other private sector partners.

In line with our updated [Barnet Plan 2021-25](#) we are proud of our tradition of partnership working and maintaining this approach is central to how we expect to achieve the best outcomes we can for our residents and businesses.

While much of our partnership work is done through formal partnerships such as the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Safeguarding Partnership, we also do a great deal through more informal relationships. This is particularly true of our work with the Voluntary, Community & Faith sectors (VCFS).

There is a thriving VCFS in Barnet with over 1,075 registered charities operating across the borough and we work closely with them across a range of services. The VCFS has been essential to our response to COVID-19. We could not have provided the level of support we did to our most vulnerable residents without them. It has been an incredible effort and we are keen to maintain this level of partnership working.

We will continue to work with all our partners to ensure a shared approach to advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion in Barnet.

# Section 6:

## Our principles and approach

The principles set out below are the core of our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. They are the areas we will focus on in delivering services that meet the needs of all our communities and to ensure we are an inclusive employer.



We will take a borough-wide approach to equalities. We recognise that one organisation alone cannot reduce inequality, grow the economy or encourage community action. We will therefore work with all our partners in the private, public and community sector and the rich diversity of Barnet's communities.

Our principles have been developed in collaboration and consultation with the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group, the staff Barnet Equalities Networks and The Communities Together Network.

### The principles are outlined below:

#### Equalities and inclusion in everything we do

We meet our responsibilities to treat people fairly, promote equalities, address inequality, challenge discrimination, and make reasonable adjustments where needed. We embed equalities into the decisions the council and partners make, and into business and financial planning processes.

#### A diverse workforce

We are an inclusive employer and will work to ensure our workforce is diverse and reflective of our community at all levels of the organisation. We will create a workplace where people feel valued, and everyone works together harmoniously and with respect for each other.

#### Insight led

We work with local partners across sectors to gather data to better understand our community and measure the impact of our work. We strive to ensure service delivery is needs-led, appropriate and accessible, and that council decisions are properly informed by evidence.

#### Open and transparent

We publish our equalities reports and impact assessments in an easily accessible manner and ensure partners can be held to account for mutually agreed outcomes.

## Meaningful engagement

We listen to our communities and aim to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be heard, so that we can better understand the barriers they face. We will promote active engagement between service providers and their users and explore innovative ways to foster dialogue.

## An inclusive and cohesive borough

We work to enable everyone to participate in the life of the community and to celebrate its diversity. We keep Barnet as a good place to live, work and study in a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination. We address where this is not met.

## A community-led approach

We support communities to get on well together and develop a shared understanding of each other's needs. We continue to strengthen the voluntary and community and faith sector, encouraging organisations to work together and residents to become more involved in their local communities.

## Encouraging equal growth

We work to create the right environment for equal economic growth across the borough which supports the development of diverse markets. We put equalities and inclusion at the heart of our work with strategic partners. We strive to ensure everyone benefits from growth and has equal access to the opportunities that growth provides.



# How we will approach our principles

Below, we have expanded upon each principle, and have set out our approach, describing the processes and policies we will adhere to so that we meet our vision to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in Barnet. We have developed a further detailed action plan that sits under this approach and can be found under Section 7 of our policy.

## Equalities and inclusion in everything we do

### Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIAs)

- all council programmes will include an assessment of the potential equalities impact for employees, service users, and residents. It is the responsibility of the service area to conduct EqIAs on their programmes or projects. Through this, officers will consider the impact of changes on individuals, particularly those who belong to vulnerable groups, and where possible mitigate the impact if it is negative
- the analysis should be brought to the attention of decision makers and considered at each relevant stage of decision making.

### Annual Business Planning Process

- equalities will be embedded into the council decision making processes and the annual business planning process
- EqIAs will be produced for individual budget proposals to assess their impact on protected characteristics, and other groups who may be disproportionately impacted by the changes. A Cumulative Equalities Impact Analysis (CEIA) will explore the cumulative impact of Barnet's budget proposals on individuals within the borough in relation to their characteristics. Members will give due regard to the CEIA in their decision making.

### Procurement and commissioning

- our commissioning and procurement processes and practices will recognise the diverse needs of our residents and we shall ensure that providers understand requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- all new standard contracts are to include equality standards and will give consideration to the equalities, diversity and inclusion agenda.



## A diverse workforce

### Workforce Diversity

- recruitment processes, succession planning and learning and development will be used to address underrepresentation of specific groups, including working to remove barriers to protected groups. We will work to eradicate conscious and unconscious bias within our processes and ensure that all our staff have the opportunity to develop and thrive in an environment that is safe, supportive and stimulating
- we will create a model for staff development that will benefit all and champion underrepresented groups to ensure a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation.

### Promoting an inclusive working environment

- the council will continue to provide flexible working arrangements, and implement our reasonable adjustment policies so that everyone within our organisation has the same opportunities within their work and career. Flexible working will help support employees who have caring responsibilities, and the use of technology and facilities will support access to staff with physical needs
- we are committed to providing a safe and supportive working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour. Mandatory EDI and bullying and harassment training is provided for all staff, with specific training provided to managers, so that it is made clear to the whole workforce that the organisation does not tolerate discrimination or harassment
- the council's pay structure ensures that it meets its obligations with regard to equal pay, and rigorous processes are in place to ensure that salary increases are applied fairly. We will continually increase its understanding of its gender and ethnicity pay gap and ensure that this is not caused by discriminatory factors within the workforce
- we will encourage staff to contribute their ideas, suggestions and feedback to ensure that we understand their concerns. We will work closely with trades unions and other staff representatives to ensure that the 'employee voice' is properly heard. We will also explore 'mutual mentoring' so that senior managers and junior staff can better understand each other's experiences.



## Insight-led

### Equalities Monitoring Questions

- directorates will monitor the take up of their services so that we can measure the extent to which we are providing equal access to our services and reaching all sections of our community
- investigate where communities might be more disadvantaged in accessing our services and develop action plans
- the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is a comprehensive set of information about the demographics of our local communities, which is updated on a regular basis and published to identify priorities for the local area
- the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Community Partnership Board regularly review the needs assessment of the local population to ensure that policy decisions are influenced and shaped by intelligence and insight.

### Workforce data

- the council will introduce indicators for diversity in all recruitment, including management. We will monitor the demographic makeup of our workforce at all levels of the workforce so that we can ascertain whether it reflects Barnet's diverse community
- we conduct a staff survey across all protected characteristics to identify shortfalls in our equalities work.

## Open and transparent

### Reporting

- the council will produce an Annual Equalities Report describing its progress in achieving its Equalities aims and objectives over the course of the year. This will be published and taken to Community Leadership and Libraries committee, for approval by Members
- all EqIAs and the Cumulative EqIA will be published online.

### Data sharing and publication

- the council is committed to publishing data relating to equalities, diversity and inclusion where possible. We will share data with our partners and the VCS where we are able. The sharing of data will help partners in the community to identify areas of need – facilitating action to address these issues.

### Procurement and commissioning

- all new contracts have performance measures built in to ensure equality issues are addressed.



## Meaningful engagement

### Developing community engagement structures throughout the organisation

- we will engage with our communities when making decisions. We will work to involve and include local people who belong to underrepresented groups and will encourage them to partake in public life. The organisation will therefore make effective use of consultation and engagement tools to inform our service planning
- guidance on equalities has been incorporated into our consultation and engagement toolkit to ensure that consultations are accessible and inclusive to different groups.

### Shared engagement structures developed with partners

- we will continue to develop our engagement mechanisms and structures with our partners. The council will work to involve equality stakeholders in the engagement process, to scrutinise service delivery, decision making, and progress.

## An inclusive and cohesive borough

### Fostering good relations

- the organisation takes a sophisticated approach to fostering good relations to improve relationships between diverse communities
- the council will not tolerate harassment, discrimination, and hate crime, and we will monitor and take appropriate action to address any such issues that have been identified
- the council will work closely with community groups to promote understanding between groups, and to challenge harassment and discrimination. We will also work with our partners to promote and celebrate the borough's diversity.

### EqlAs and Business Planning Process

- by integrating equalities into everything we do, we can design services that meet the needs of our diverse residents, enabling everyone to have the opportunity to take part in the community.

## A community led approach

### Develop an 'inclusive communities' approach

- the council and our partners will work together and with place based communities to build more welcoming and inclusive places to live.

### Expanding the Communities Together Network (CTN)

- the council shall continue to facilitate the growth of the CTN to help foster community cohesion and enable organisations to take on more responsibility for their local areas to deliver better outcomes for residents and service users.

## Encouraging equal growth

### Equal growth

- the council will continue to embrace opportunities for growth and development in areas of the borough that require investment. We will ensure that the growth of the borough benefits all, and that we provide the necessary growth in infrastructure required to support this.

### Consultation and Engagement

- our residents and local businesses will be key partners in any regeneration scheme. Any developments will have a strong engagement plan that consults and takes into account the needs of residents. Engagement activities will be inclusive and allow all voices to be heard, especially from groups who tend to be underrepresented.



# Section 7:

## Our Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan - our priorities and approach for 2021-25

The [Action Plan for 2021 - 2025](#) sets out in detail how we plan to deliver this policy. To ensure that EDI is embedded in the work we do across the whole organisation, the action plan has been arranged into our four themes which are included in our [Barnet Plan 2021-25](#).

By embedding actions across our Barnet Plan will help ensure we achieve the principle of Equalities and inclusion are in everything we do.

### Our four Barnet Plan priorities are:

- **Clean, Safe and Well Run**

A place where our streets are clean and antisocial behaviour is dealt with so residents feel safe. Providing good quality, customer friendly services in all that we do

- **Family Friendly**

Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best.

- **Healthy**

A place with fantastic facilities for all ages, enabling people to live happy and healthy lives

- **Thriving**

A place fit for the future, where all residents, businesses and visitors benefit from improved sustainable infrastructure & opportunity.

### Our approach to achieving the Barnet Plan priorities

We will deliver our Barnet Plan using a preventative approach and considering equalities in all that we do:

- **Prevention**

Adopting preventative measures to help people remain healthy, happy and independent in all aspects of life.

- **Equality**

A strong cohesive community, where diversity is celebrated, and everyone has equal opportunity regardless of their background place with fantastic facilities for all ages, enabling people to live happy & healthy lives.

The actions for each of the Barnet Plan priorities and our approach are set out in full in the [EDI Action Plan](#) – a wide-ranging internal planning document that will be kept under monthly review by the EDI Steering Group. To further encourage organisational ownership

of the policy and action plan, each member of the council's management team of senior directors (CMT) has adopted a protected characteristic to champion and nominated a lead from their directorate to take responsibility for the corresponding actions in the action plan.

## Section 8: Monitoring – how we measure our success

It is important that we monitor, analyse, and report our progress in achieving the aims set out in this policy. This allows us to adapt our approach to ensure we're achieving the outcomes we've agreed on.

### Annual Equalities Report

We publish an Annual Equalities Report for our Community Leadership and Libraries Committee. This provides a publicly available update on the work we have been doing to achieve our objectives, and our progress towards meeting them. Delivering it to the committee means our elected councillors can scrutinise our work and hold the organisation to account.

Our quarterly Council Performance Report contains key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to our success in delivering the EDI action plan. This will hold us to account as an organisation and ensure that we achieve the outcomes we commit to. The action plan will be a live document showing the current progress of each piece of work.

The EDI Steering Group also reports to CMT every quarter, giving directors a full account of progress on delivering the action plan.

### Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan

This action plan is a detailed and thorough planning document that the council uses to manage its work in delivering the EDI policy.

The action plan has been completely revised for 2021 and is divided into the six themes that reflect the priorities and approach in the Barnet Plan. Progress against the actions in the plan is tracked and scrutinised by the EDI Steering Group and their monthly meetings and reported to our senior Council Management Team.

### Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIAs)

We carry out EqIAs whenever we develop a new policy, change or create a service, or make any other decision that has an impact on the community or our staff. Our EqIA tool guides officers through a process of research and analysis to understand the likely impact of a decision on people with protected characteristics. Wherever possible this is informed by consultation and engagement with communities and staff. We have a network of trained staff in every directorate to help officers complete EqIAs, which are published along with committee papers.

### Procurement and commissioning

All new contracts will have performance measures built in to ensure equality issues are addressed.