



# Equalities Report

December 2022



## Foreword

Barnet has long been a diverse borough, and is becoming even more diverse, with people of many different ethnic backgrounds, faiths and life experiences living side by side. The richness of this diversity is one of our greatest strengths; our resident perception survey showed that 88% of respondents agreed that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This year, we have started to set out plans to strengthen our approach to promoting and celebrating our communities. For the first time, we made funding available for community groups to celebrate Black History Month, and we have either directly or indirectly supported more than 70 events across the borough. We are keen to build on this and use it as a framework for greater community engagement and for more celebration of our diversity.

Since our last report, we have continued to change how we consider and deliver our response to equality, diversity and inclusion. An internal audit of our equalities governance took place in autumn of 2021; we agreed with the central message of the audit, that evidencing impact is difficult and that the structures needed to change to effectively address our challenges. In response, we fundamentally reformed our approach to governance and action planning during 2022. We now have two cross-council groups in place to address our challenges, one focused on our residents and the other on our workforce – together they aim to fight inequality in the council and in the borough.

We have also moved out of the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, we note that the pandemic has brought equalities into a stark new light and has had a disproportionate impact on certain groups - especially those who are already impacted by inequalities or with protected characteristics. These disparities are being further exacerbated as the cost-of-living crisis deepens, with many predicting the possibility of a global economic recession. This report sets out some of our activity this year to tackle this. This work continues, however, as we recognise that addressing inequality and improving outcomes for residents are long-term goals. Our analyses have shown that there is more that we could do to improve opportunities for our residents through addressing systemic inequality, improving life chances for a healthy and long life, ensuring opportunities for good education and employment, and through access to quality services/support, at the right time and based on need. ***Wherever we find that people have experienced inequality or disproportionate impact due to their background or identity we will work to tackle this and eradicate it.***

Now, organisational equality, diversity and inclusion are very talked about subjects, but it is not just buzzwords. It is about making sure everyone feels included and supported and enabled to feel at their best to deliver for our residents. We have come a long way from where we were, but we have so much more to do to ensure we foster inclusion/fairness and promote diversity at all levels of the organisation. Internally, we have been working across the council and with our staff Barnet Equality Allies Networks to address inequality in the workplace. We have developed an internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap – setting out workforce action and targets up until 2025, with clear reporting and tracking metrics to promote accountability and progress across the organisation. The other members of CMT and I will be presenting this data back to our workforce on an annual basis to emphasise our continued commitment to centring EDI in all areas of decision making and delivery within the organisation.

Our Barnet Equality Allies (BEA) Staff Networks co-chair comments that:

*"Over the last year, efforts have been made to improve the way the BEA works with the senior leaders throughout the council. We have now successfully built-in forums and processes which aid authentic co-production and reflection, and which help to ensure that strategic change is informed by the lived experiences of our staff, particularly staff who identify as having one or more protected characteristic. Moving forward, we hope to continue to strengthen this working relationship so that together, we are actively addressing inequality and improving the workplace experiences of our staff."*

This report celebrates our successes over the last year and outlines our ambitions for equalities going forward.

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**  
Leader of the Council

**John Hooton**  
Chief Executive of the Council

## Executive summary

In June 2021, we published our Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) policy (2021-25), setting out our strategic equality objective: ***“All 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”***.

On the back of the policy, we have delivered significant change in our corporate approach to EDI, and we are now working within a culture of different expectations. We are now in a position where we are developing our approach in partnership both across the organisation and with external partners. We apply an insight driven approach – we have for example introduced an HR Diversity Dashboard as well as carried out an initial Disproportionality study.

To understand more about residents, the Disproportionality study applied the proportion of a particular group relative to the proportion of the majority group, using Relative Rate Index (RRI) methodology. It identified that disproportionality for those with protected characteristics exists in the borough, but also that we do not necessarily always fully understand the reasons why, or the underlying factors that cause it. Our analyses have shown us that there is more that we could do to ensure that we fight inequality, and that residents have access to quality services, at the right time and based on their needs. In response to our changing policy landscape, we have this year introduced a new governance framework and developed more targeted action plans.

We established a Tackling the Gaps: Fighting Inequality Group to address inequalities in the borough by taking on an outward-facing, resident and partnership focused equality, diversity and inclusion agenda. The aim of the group is to ensure that we are both aware of and understand issues of inequality and disproportionality in the borough, and that we tackle these where applicable in policies, strategies, service delivery, procurement and so on. As a result of our long-term work, we would expect to see a positive change in our disproportionality data sets and in relevant resident perception survey results.

Our key activity this year has been to ensure that departments have evolving plans and activities in place to tackle inequality in their service areas, improving long-term outcomes for residents. As such, we have focused on bringing insight together, with each service area analysing the demographic data about people who access their services, as well as by carrying out specific studies such as on preventing Homelessness. This is leading to the development of programmes to address identified challenges such as gaps in health and financial inequality between resident groups, as well as differences in resident opportunities and experience of education, employment and range of services across the council. We have also started to implement service changes to address these challenges, such as through introducing tools to improve accessibility of our website and contact centre, and by introducing training and development opportunities to practitioners to practice in anti-racist and anti-oppressive ways and respond to current national and local issues.

An internal Workforce EDI Steering Group has also been established, bringing together representatives from staff networks, Human Resources and managers from service departments. The council is committed to being an inclusive employer and has an ambitious Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda. We continue to develop the role of our various staff networks, and have worked closely with the networks to create an action plan for change. We have set out six Equality and Inclusion commitments, that will steward all decision making and delivery throughout. They form the basis of a comprehensive action plan, which has already driven considerable change in areas such as recruitment. This year we have also adopted the Race at Work Charter, have become a Disability Confident Employer Level 2, and submitted an application for Stonewall Indices.

### Summary of next steps

As our understanding and implementation of EDI activity continues to evolve and mature, we have seen where we have gaps in our policy and delivery landscape and the challenge now is to establish ways of utilising the information to address issues in a systemic, structural approach. As such, our key activity next year will be focused on:

- Refreshing our EDI policy to ensure alignment with the development of the vision for the borough and the priorities set out in the new Corporate Plan. In short, it is an opportunity to provide a more consistent, resident facing policy approach as well as to incorporate the evolving employee facing outcomes.
- Conjointly, publishing a “State of the Borough” situational report that will set out at more depth the themes of this report. Building on our initial disproportionality study it will provide further insight from the census analysis and our local data sources as well as resident engagement activity and other information sources. It will also report on our internal, employment picture.
- To underpin this, we will also publish our EDI Action Plans, that will set out in more detail what we will do to address these challenges, both as an employer and to improve outcomes for our residents.

We know that there is more to do, and that a joint approach to tackling the gaps is crucial for our development of EDI. We started the work reflecting in-wards on our own service delivery, on who is accessing it and what it tells us. We will continue to do so, but key to our next step is also to amplify our voice, building a dialogue with our residents, working with our partners and influencing the regional and national agenda.

### Note on language used in this report

We recognise the importance of using inclusive language; communicating in a way that is accessible and respectful and values, includes and empowers our residents, staff and partners. We are reviewing our communications from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective and are in progress of developing communications guidance. For example, we want to move away from umbrella terms used to indicate people from the global south in order to have more progressive and insightful data into the lived experiences of both our residents and employees. In some instances, this report groups people together under terms such as “Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic” or “Black and Black British” and so on; we currently apply this type of terminology primarily in instances where this is the data breakdown available - we are guided by Office of National Statistics. In other instances, this is appropriate usage such as Black History Month. Where possible, we aim to nuance the picture, to recognise a range of lived experiences as well as intersectionality.

## Our statutory duties

As a local authority the council has a number of legal duties to meet under the Equality Act 2010. The act provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the general and specific Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and requires Barnet to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

This places a legal obligation on the council to pay due regard to equalities. We do this by assessing the impact of our actions on different groups in Barnet including those identified in equality legislation as protected characteristics, namely:

- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy,
- Sexual orientation
- Religion

In addition to assessing the impact of proposals on the nine protected characteristics, the council also assess the impact on certain other groups, whenever possible. This includes those who may be considered disadvantaged and/or vulnerable, such as carers (including young carers), people on low incomes, people from areas of deprivation and the unemployed.

### Publication of equality information

Publishing this annual report is part of that duty. As part of the public sector equality duty the council has a specific duty to publish equality information about its employees and residents who share a protected characteristic and to prepare and publish equality objectives. An overview of the characteristics of our residents can be found in [JSNA – Borough Summary – Barnet Open Data](#). The population of the borough continues to grow, change and become increasingly diverse. The data is regularly updated, but a more in-depth update is planned in the new year in light of census 2021 data releases.

### Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs)

We undertake Equality Impact Assessments on changes to policy or services that could have an impact on people that share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. These assessments are a way to make sure our individuals and teams think carefully about the likely impact of policies or procedures, strategies, functions and services. It assesses and records the actual, potential or likely impact of significant change, on different groups of people. Equality Impact Assessments are attached to each committee report where there is a public decision on significant changes to policy or services.

### Strategic Equalities Objective (SEO)

As required under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the council has an overarching Strategic Equalities Objective (SEO) which was updated in 2021 and is included in our Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy 2021-2025. The SEO states: *'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'*.

We monitor this duty as part of our action plans, as set out in this report.

## Governance

The Council Management Team (CMT) holds overall responsibility and decision making on EDI Action Plan and Policy. In addition to specific responsibilities (e.g., Public Sector Equality Duty), CMT is meeting with staff network Leads on a quarterly basis and CMT members each sponsor a staff network. Staff networks will continue to play a key part in terms of developing our organisational approach to EDI.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Action Plan review

In the summer/autumn of 2021 an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Action Plan review was carried out. It was delivered as part of the London Borough of Barnet Internal Audit & Anti-Fraud Strategy and Annual Plan 2020-21 by PwC's EDI specialists on behalf of LBB's Head of Internal Audit, as part of Cross Council Assurance Services (CCAS). We agreed with the central message of the Audit report, that evidencing impact is difficult and that the current governance structures need to change to effectively address EDI. Rather than responding to each recommendation, we fundamentally reformed our approach to governance and action planning during 2022.

The EDI Steering Group, Staff Networks and departments delivered significant change in the corporate approach to EDI, and we are now working with a culture of different expectations. As our understanding and implementation of EDI activity continues to evolve and mature, it changes our policy and delivery landscape. We therefore made the decision to dismantle the existing governance structure (the EDI Steering Group) and replace it with a new governance framework.

## New Governance Structure

To give equal weighting to the internal and external aspects of delivering a robust approach to EDI we have created two groups, e.g. The Tackling the Gaps: Fighting Inequality Group focused on resident impact and the Workforce EDI Steering Group that focuses on the organisation and staff impacts.

To aid this, and our strategic delivery, reporting has been made clearer by defining outcome focused objectives in refreshed EDI Action Plans. The goal is to include fewer actions that are more targeted, with clear delivery planning. Two separate action plans have been introduced, with reporting against key activity included in this report. The plans will be further developed and published in the spring, together with the draft EDI Policy.

## Partnership working

The council is committed to working in partnership with other organisations in the borough to ensure they share our ambitions for equality in Barnet. The council maintains close links with other statutory services such as health, police, education and voluntary sector organisations, as well as commercial businesses and other private sector partners. As we continue to develop our agenda, we will aim to further strengthen our relationships and act as an enabler of discussion and change. Together with our partners we can amplify our voice, building a dialogue with our residents, and influencing the regional and national agenda.

This will build on our existing links and key partner networks such as Health and Wellbeing Board, Barnet Partnership Board, Children and Young People's Partnership Board and so on. In particular, the health inequality activity is already operating within existing Barnet Borough Partnership, joining up health and social care partners to address health inequality.

We will also continue to work in partnership with Barnet's thriving voluntary community and faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector. There are over 1,075 registered charities operating across the borough and a broad network of informal groups, volunteering and many other ways that residents participate in civic life. Strategic oversight and representation for the VCFSE sector is provided by the Barnet Together Alliance. The alliance was established following the strong links forged with the existing with Barnet Together partnership during the pandemic. The community response to Covid-19 was co-designed and delivered in close partnership with the sector and many workstreams were led by VCFSE organisations. In October 2022, the alliance was formally launched with a conference attended by around 150 organisations. One of the event's key themes was EDI. Together, we will continue to build on this.

## Links to other strategies

This report brings together activity that is taking place across the council. As such it reports on strategic work that is also being reported elsewhere, in other strategies and/or to other committees. The benefit of this report – as well as our EDI governance structure – is that it brings together this reporting and looks at it from a different angle. Furthermore, this focused attention also ensures that EDI activity and any lessons learned is then also embedded into considerations in other policies, strategies and action plans across the council. Examples of this kind of activity can be found throughout this report.

## Tackling the Gaps: Fighting Inequality

Identifying actionable insight and opportunities to address issues are key to long-term success. Work is ongoing across the council to shift our thinking, identifying the gaps and how we can fight inequality. This section outlines some of our key activity, but it is not an exhaustive list. This work is bringing together opportunities for further collaboration and joint working across these areas, identifying best practice findings and lessons together, and in particular our thinking about how we can make a difference.

## Disproportionality study

In 2020-21, North Central London Directors of Children's Services commissioned an analysis of disproportionality in children's services outcomes. Following this work Barnet undertook an initial Disproportionality study, widening our understanding to other service areas. Using Relative Rate Index (RRI) methodology it applies the proportion of a particular group relative to the proportion of the majority group.

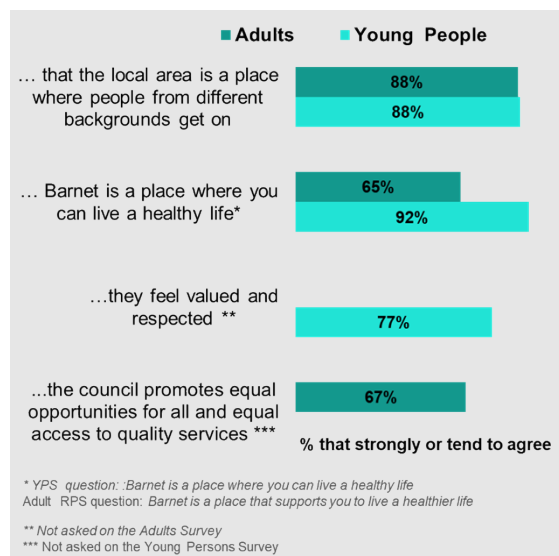
The study identified that disproportionality exists in the Borough, but also that we do not necessarily always fully understand the reasons why, or the underlying factors that cause it. Furthermore, it identified that data is not systematically collected across the services to give a thorough picture of disproportionality. The initial study was primarily focused on ethnicity; as a key area of inequality, but also as an area where we tend to have data; future work will expand this scope to include other protected characteristics.

The study showed that this disproportionality can have a significant impact on our residents – for example, initial results showed that Black and Black British residents are more likely to experience disproportionality across different parts of their life - while they do better in school than the national average, they have a higher risk of low attainment at school compared to the white pupils, and as they get older, they are at increased risk of domestic abuse, of using sexual health testing and of becoming homeless. The study also indicated a link to deprivation, for example, for substance misuse, people from White ethnic groups are over-represented in treatment statistics, with ward level information indicating an emphasis centred around the most deprived wards within the borough. In light of the new census data, we are updating, and expanding the analysis.

### Resident perception surveys

Barnet Residents’ Perception Surveys tracks council reputation, service and local area perceptions. There are two versions of the survey – one for adults (2,000 respondents) and one for young people aged between 11 and 18 (500 respondents). The surveys offer a representative sample of our population and is run by an independent research organisation.

The results show a positive picture, where the vast majority of residents (88%) agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is in line with the previous wave of the survey conducted in 2020 and (for adults, where we can compare) significantly above the London (85%) and the National average (83%).



This year, we also asked adult residents if they agreed that ‘the council promotes equal opportunities for all and equal access to quality services’. Two thirds of residents (67%) agreed with the statement. It received high levels of agreement compared to other questions about perception of the council, and was the fifth highest level of satisfaction. However, it also received the highest percentage of residents indicating they ‘don’t know’. Residents’ lack of awareness of available services is a reoccurring theme across other recent studies, and we are exploring – and implementing - options for more inclusive communication.

Results show residents that self-identify as disabled, are less likely to be agree with the above question statements – but also that they are significantly less satisfied with most services. Disabled residents are also more likely to be older – which is another cohort that is more likely to be dissatisfied. We are carrying out further qualitative work to understand more about the reasons.

### Tackling health inequality

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25 aims to reduce health inequalities and improve healthy life expectancy. Geographical differences in how long people are expected to live for (“life expectancy”) and how many years they will live in good health (“healthy life expectancy”) still exist in Barnet. For example, people living in Burnt Oak are more likely to live 6.7 years less than those living in Hampstead Garden Suburb. Those living in most deprived areas of the borough, some ethnic minority groups, and those with complex health needs are at most risk of living in poor health and dying prematurely. The Health and Wellbeing Board is focusing delivery of the Strategy on a ‘place-based’ approach to tackle these challenges. Some of the projects implemented over the last 12 months are highlighted below:

- Health Champions programme that recruited 229 residents from across the borough and from different demographic background during COVID-19 pandemic have expanded to cover wider health and wellbeing issues such as mental health, cardiovascular diseases prevention and childhood immunisation.
- Barnet was successful in attracting £500k from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to implement Vaccine Champions programme, focus has been on improving uptake of the winter vaccinations (COVID-19 and flu) and routine childhood immunisations. Key achievements included delivering over 3,200 first, second and booster COVID-19 vaccinations over 8-month period in low-take up areas, 15 COVID-19 vaccinations and 50 Lateral flow tests for homeless/ rough sleepers at health fair run by voluntary and community sector partners, two health sessions run by Belifted in Graham Park Estate which included an interactive session on COVID-19 vaccinations and blood pressure checks. We have allocated further funding to projects in faith and voluntary and community sector to help work with communities.
- Healthy Heart Programme is a peer support programme, as part of Barnet Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention Action Plan, that aims to raise awareness of CVD risk factors and encourage people to come forward to health checks screening in the community. The team have garnered support from Community Barnet to engage with the Barnet African Caribbean Association and Edgware Foodbank. The project team has delivered a wide range of outreach activities and community engagement events reaching a total of 150 residents with an additional 30 residents from the targeted ethnic groups engaging with the intensive programme. Qualitative feedback from residents indicates that more members of the community have increased awareness of high blood pressure, have sought advice from their GP, have purchased monitors and are considering dietary and activity changes.
- In response to concerns about an apparent increase in suicide during the pandemic, we initiated an extensive suicide prevention campaign aimed at working-aged men between November 2021 and January 2022. The campaign combined outdoor advertising, digital marketing and targeted engagement with local male-dominated businesses such as construction companies, gyms and taxi services, encouraging use of the Stay Alive app as well as launching Andy's Men Club locally. The app reached over 100, 000 people, with digital content displayed online over 2,000,000m times. Andy's Man Club attendees reported that the Clubs allowed them to express thoughts and emotions that they would have otherwise not spoken about. The Clubs made them feel less alone and they had others to talk to when they needed. Preliminary data suggest no record of suicide in men during the campaign although further data validation is underway, this is exceptional result compared to London data on suicide for the same time period.
- A school-based healthy weight project called SMILE (School Meals Initiative for Learning Healthy Eating) successfully supported primary school children learn about healthy eating and encouraged them to make healthier food choices through education and SMILE trays, particularly focusing on schools in most deprived areas of the borough.
- The Barnet Young Brushers project; a targeted supervised toothbrushing programme in over 40 Early Years settings have reached over 400 children so far, evaluation of the intervention is underway.
- Barnet secured £286K to improve our drug and alcohol treatment for rough sleepers which is funding an outreach nurse, a complex needs specialist and outreach workers including one Romanian speaking to reach this particularly underserved population. Recent one-week focused outreach activity in Graham Park resulted in the service identifying 44 rough sleepers, 24 were new to the service. The team delivered a range of interventions including harm minimisation advice, giving out sanitary products, giving out food as well as people being booked in for follow-up.

### Tackling the gaps for children and young people

Children and young people across all cohorts perform better than the London and England average in school. However, the North London Disproportionality reports highlighted education and attainment disparities across ethnicities. In England, London and all North London LAs, Black pupils on average have a slightly lower attainment 8 (a measure that is based on students' attainment in their best eight subjects at GCSE) score than White pupils. In comparison, Asian and Chinese pupils have higher attainment scores in comparison to White pupils. Furthermore, pupils of Black and Mixed ethnicity are more likely to have one or more fixed term exclusions. There is on-going work addressing attainment and school exclusion gaps in schools, which has been strengthened this year by forming an Equality Exclusions and Attendance Board, a sub board of the Schools and Settings Standards Partnership Board and by education hosting 2 conferences led by expert guest speakers in which workshops were delivered and schools shared emerging good practice.



The Preventing Exclusion of Black Boys project gained traction in 2022 and Family Service are also piloting a Team around the School to enable multi-agency teams to be assigned to schools to respond to their community needs, with the aim to decrease exclusions. Due to the continued long-term impact of the pandemic, there has been an increase in risk of permanent exclusions in primary and secondary school. In primary school, these programmes, and in particular, the extra resourcing of the Inclusive Advisory Team's capacity has supported schools to either maintain these children in their setting or work with the local authority to identify and secure a more appropriate setting. This year, no primary aged children were excluded. In secondary schools, there has been a significant, 35% decrease, in permanent exclusions. However, black boys and girls continue to be over-represented in this cohort.

Ofsted have been identifying and celebrating the work that our schools have embarked on this year:

*"Pupils and sixth-form students cannot praise the school highly enough. Pupils have lots of opportunities to make their voice heard. They contribute to school life through a range of committees and groups. One area of many that stands out is the committee to promote equality and diversity. It has made recommendations that leaders have taken on board and implemented"* (Ashmole)

*"Leaders have created a culture of mutual respect and understanding in the school. Their work in areas such as anti-racism and equalities is of particular note. Staff enjoy working at the school and commit to providing the best possible education for pupils. They are well supported by leaders, who prioritise matters of staff's workload and well-being".* (Whitefield)

The North London Disproportionality report also showed that, as an average in London, children from a Black or Mixed ethnic background are over-represented in the looked after children cohort. In addition, Barnet has a proportionally large number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), which contributes to "other ethnic group" being over-represented. Children's Services have introduced training and professional development opportunities to practitioners, including partner agencies, to ensure the workforce is equipped and confident to practice in anti-racist and anti-oppressive ways and responds to current national and local issues.

## Tackling homelessness

Barnet Homes carried out a Homelessness Early Intervention and Prevention Insight project, highlighting the intersectionality and complexity of disproportionality. The issues that are presenting for residents are happening 'upstream' - and are then brought to light when they later present as homeless. The initial Disproportionality study showed over representation of Black and Black British approaching as homeless, compared to the White population. The insight project found that ethnic minorities are more likely to use services across a variety of council and partnership organisations. Key reasons for this include the distribution of debt as seen amongst those approaching Barnet Homes and the role of unemployment, low-income and lack of recourse to public funds (NRPFs) as significant drivers of homelessness.

It also found that people with disabilities were 2.4x more likely to become homeless in Barnet, with mental ill health as the largest disability presenting to Barnet Homes. Reasons for this disproportionality include established links between mental health, traumatic experiences, and rough sleeping, as well as mental health being a cause of homelessness and the result of homelessness.

Results are considered in reviewing the Housing as well as Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategies, with drafts due to Housing and Growth committee 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. Action planning is in progress, focused on:

- Increasing application support; in-person, implementing mobility and digital sensitivity improvements.
- Introducing trauma informed service delivery; training is currently being procured with the aim of increasing quality of support, in particular from mental health perspective.
- Reviewing housing support pathways - including developing and improving in-reach with prisons and hospitals, with bids for liaison posts in progress – as well as communication in these pathways and to residents.
- Strengthening targeted intervention by continued analysis of structural drivers of homelessness.

## Tackling the gaps in how we engage with all our customers e.g., in the contact centre

As part of our Resident Experience Strategy, we continue to focus on identifying if any gaps exist that prevent all residents to equally access services. Initial engagement and insight has highlighted some key barriers

around digital access as well as how residents with certain disabilities contact the council. As an initial response, the customer services face to face team based in Colindale have been reprovisioned to assist residents who struggle to use online services more directly, in our libraries and via referrals from Age UK Barnet. 54 residents were supported over September and October. This is alongside a full programme of activity to support residents who are digitally excluded and a new telephony solution to make it easier for residents to speak to us when they need to.

A range of accessibility tools have also been introduced; a British Sign Language (BSL) video service for residents who wish to contact the council using BSL; a website accessibility tool to assist residents with a range of disabilities to access online content and we are also planning to introduce a 'Chat' function, to support residents with speech impairments and others who cannot communicate verbally.

Equality Impact Assessments continue to be embedded in all initiatives as we continue to re-design the 'front door' improving access for all our residents and communities.

### **Tackling the cost of living crisis**

The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on all of our residents, but making it much worse for some, especially our most vulnerable residents. A targeted approach to supporting these residents was approved by Policy & Resources committee on the 29 September. We are working as a cross-functional team to ensure residents who can often 'fall through the gaps' are being captured in considerations across services. The measures focused on providing both direct and indirect support to residents who are experiencing financial vulnerabilities by the development of a £2 million residents support fund, streamlined application process, match-funding for a community response fund and outreach advisers who can provide proactive support in the places our most vulnerable residents can benefit from their advice. We are currently reviewing data from our Resident Support Fund application process to identify who and what residents are applying and how we can best reach them with messages about the support that is available. This will inform for example where we introduce warm places, which will assist in providing places of intervention. We are trialling this approach at Chipping Barnet Foodbank which now has a digital inclusion champion from BOOST (an employability support organisation funded by Barnet Homes) visiting every Saturday. Laptops are also donated at these sessions which residents' access. This enables them to build up the skills and confidence they need to can look for work or apply for support themselves.

### **Tackling the gaps in employment**

The Work, Skills and Productivity Action Plan approaches include 'inclusive', with a focus on ensuring that all residents benefit from opportunities, with focus on young people and those furthest from work. This aligns with the initial disproportionality study, showing that the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on young people (18-24), who were more likely to be unemployed, compared to older people. Indicative analysis applying the Labour Survey showed that the employment rate for black residents also decreased significantly during the pandemic, with black females particularly impacted. BOOST (that provide employment and benefit advice in Barnet) have employed a specialist adviser to work with Ukrainian refugees and are recruiting for a specialist disability advisor. Plans are in progress to enable us to move forward on plans for more targeted support to our most vulnerable residents, such as a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women's project linked to green skills.

### **Tackling the gaps in Adults Social Care, green spaces & leisure**

Communities, Adults and Health has applied an EDI 'lens' in undertaking data analysis, work with contracted providers, as well as in developing this approach across engagement and co-production activity to better understand the lived experiences of our residents. This work has shown that a higher proportion of females access Adult Social Care (ASC) than males, in particular when 65 years old and over. There is a slightly lower proportion of people accessing ASC identifying as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, compared to the overall (all age) Barnet population. There are aspects of intersectionality to explore in relation to this; such as the percentage of people who are BAME and in receipt of ASC and how this differs when age is considered. We also know from the ASC survey that lower proportions of Black, Black British and Asian, and Asian British people rated their quality of life as a whole as good or very good.

As a result of this analysis, we have developed delivery plans that are focused on improving access to services, activities and places, and experiences of them to meet specific types of needs. Action planning has taken place and delivery is in progress, with current focus on:

- As part of the refreshed Fit and Active Barnet (FAB) programme, continuing to work with networks such as the Disability Physical Activity Network, to increase the inclusive leisure offer and encourage participation in a range of accessible opportunities through the 'Give it a go' campaign.
- Developing our understanding of the usage of parks and green spaces by different community groups as well as developing our trees and woodland assets in a way that promotes equitable tree coverage across the borough, relating to good air quality.
- Embedding this approach across our new engagement and co-production strategy and charter.

## Environment and Sustainability

A programme of activity is taking form as part of our vision "Working together to be one of London's most sustainable boroughs", which will enable us to deliver our net zero commitments as well as the requirements of the Environment Act. Thinking about equality in this context is crucial to ensure that solutions are effectively embedded and do not adversely impact some residents. For example, the introduction of road traffic controls could displace congestion and vehicles to surrounding main roads, where there is a larger likelihood of smaller properties. In some cases, this also correlates with higher deprivation levels. We are making it easier to make sustainable choices in areas where properties do not have off street parking by introducing kerb side electric vehicle charging points (acknowledging that this type of car is, nonetheless, not a viable option for all residents). We are also implementing a range of initiatives to support people reducing their waste outputs and maximising their recycling and reuse efforts

Our thinking will be further developed together with residents, community groups and businesses. A key part of this is our establishment of a Citizens Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity. A provider has been procured to set up the assembly, and engagement activity has started. This will be followed by a formal deliberative assembly that will start in the New Year. Assembly members will be a representative sample from across the borough population. We have begun scoping a research project with Middlesex University as well as working with the Design Council to apply a behavioural insight lens to how we develop our approaches to communicating messages around sustainability to different groups, recognising the barriers they may have to making sustainable choices.

## Tackling the gaps in Community Safety

The Community Safety Strategy 2022-2027 has recently been launched and outlines how we will work together to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Barnet. The strategy was underpinned by detailed analysis and public consultation. It focuses on five community safety priorities for the borough and sets out how we will deliver on those priorities. As we develop the delivery approach, we will be embedding equality considerations.

As part of the delivery of those priorities we have committed to launching two "pathfinder projects"; Community Safety Hubs and Ward Walks. Two Community Safety Hubs were launched in the autumn, with a further four hubs planned over the coming months. The hubs will bring together different services to allow residents to report anti-social behaviour, hate crime or other issues to the council or its partners and keep the community better informed of the actions we are taking and the results that have been achieved. Residents accessing the hubs will be asked to complete a feedback form on how they found the experience, which will also seek to gather information on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion for those accessing the hubs.

The Ward Walk pathfinder project was also launched in Autumn with a programme of two walks per ward taking place throughout the borough so that residents from all backgrounds can raise concerns about their area, directly with council officers, police partners, councillors, resident associations, and community groups.

We recognise that previously there were gaps in our data recording, so to address this we have developed a new anti-social behaviour perpetrator and victim recording process, along with new enforcement documents, which will enable us to report on who is accessing our service to further develop our strategies and approach to anti-social behaviour and crime – and ensure that residents from all backgrounds are supported.

## Tackling low resident engagement and enabling co-produced service delivery changes

We have recently approved Barnet's Community Participation Strategy 2022; building on our strong consultation foundation, and our existing participation activity. It sets out the principles and approaches that the council will take in putting the community at the heart of decision-making and service delivery. It actively advances equalities and diversity by helping to ensure the council reaches and hears from a diverse cross-section of residents. For example, through going where people are, in their local communities, and reaching out to specific groups and communities for contribution, rather than expecting people to come to us. This way we will ensure that solutions are tailored to meet local needs wherever possible. This will be a key piece of focus for next year, and as we do more on community engagement, we can think more creatively around how we fight inequality.

We are trialling the approach through our 'pathfinder projects'. This includes Leaders Listens events. In these events, the leader of the council, will meet with community groups to hear their opinions and questions of the council, especially groups whose voices that may not have been heard in the past. This first set of events are aimed specifically at residents with disabilities. Following the results of the Resident Perception Survey; we know that they are more likely to be dissatisfied with our services; we want to listen to them to make sure we can improve for the future.

Our 'My Say Matters' Child Participation and Family involvement Strategy 2022-2025, is an example of the potential and importance of engagement. It has been co-created with an emphasis on building relationships with lesser heard and vulnerable groups. The group of children and young people that we developed the strategy with told us that equalities, diversity and inclusion need to be at the heart of My Say Matters and this means everyone will be supported to share their voice and express themselves fully. Especially those from racially minoritised, migrant and LGBTQ+ communities, disabled children and other marginalised groups. This is being embedded across services and include children and young people in the planning of new strategies and service developments.

## Celebrating our communities

The council is committed to ensuring that voices of underrepresented groups are heard and celebrated, including through holding events of cultural significance to celebrate the diversity of the borough. For example, the council has for the first time made funding available for local community groups to celebrate Black History Month. Celebrations started with an opening ceremony hosted by the council to mark the start of Black History Month and included live musical performances. Throughout the month the council promoted several different external black history events such as: The African Cultural Association - Celebrating African Culture, Health and Wellness in the Black Community, and Barnet Mencap Black History Month Exhibition to name a few. Another example is that the council hosted its own Diwali celebration event at Hendon Town Hall in partnership with Neasden Hindu temple.

These events are only the start of our celebrations, we are developing an events programme that aims to recognise, honour and celebrate the various events that are important to our local communities. Current activity includes planning for a Barnet Winter Festival that celebrates a wide-ranging number of events from Christmas and Chanukah in December to the Lunar New Year in February. We are working with our local communities to ensure that all important events are celebrated, including through community organisations applying for small grants to host an event to celebrate a winter faith and/or cultural community event in Barnet.



# Our workforce

Barnet is proud of its diverse and vibrant workforce. Over the last two years we have realigned our corporate agenda to centralise Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to ensure Barnet is an empowering workplace for all. This has resulted in the introduction of our Six Equality and Inclusion commitments, that will steward all decision making and delivery throughout the council:

1. We have an inclusive culture, based on an empathic understanding of people's life situations and lived experiences
2. Our workforce is representative of the communities we serve, at all levels
3. Our working environment is safe and supportive, free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and micro-aggressions, where all staff can bring their whole selves to work
4. All staff are given the opportunity to grow and develop
5. Barriers to equality are better understood and eliminated
6. Equalities, diversity and inclusion are promoted at all levels of the council, internally and externally

The commitments are underpinned by an 85-point road map which is tracked and monitored by the Workforce EDI Steering Group, to create organisational transparency and accountability. In the road map we have identified 10 key reporting goals for CMT with the intention to publish the progress to internal audiences every spring, creating organisational wide accountability and reaffirming our commitment to putting EDI at the centre of everything we do. The 10 key reporting goals are:

1. Increase representation of people who identify as being a part of the LGBTQ+ Community across Directorates to 6% by 2025	2. Increase representation of people who identify as Disabled to 8% across Directorates by 2025	3. Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Cases to be tracked and anonymised by HR and broken down across Directorate and seniority level
4. We will promote and track the use of anonymised recruitment, diverse panels and internal vacancies for hiring managers	5. EDI Steering group is supported by CMT and attended by CMT representatives	6. Managers are adequately trained and supported to identify and deal with matters of discrimination, harassment, and bullying
7. SMT and CMT represent the borough and workforce they serve with a focus on Disability, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality by 2025	8. Staff feedback surveys translated in to focus groups with at least three key outcomes of per directorate that are reported on internally	9. HR Policies are reviewed to ensure they protect and promote Barnet's diverse and vibrant workforce and culture by 2024
	10. SMT roles are filled through anonymised recruitment and published internally first	

To support this, we have implemented new data collection points which have allowed us to create more robust reporting system that capture new and often overlooked narratives. At present our HR EDI dashboard breakdowns data in line with other London Council's and the Office of National Statistics. However, over the next year we will move away from the umbrella term "BAME" or "Black Asian and Minoritised Ethnic groups" to create more equal and insightful data that allows us to properly evaluate the experiences and intersectionality of staff. Enabling us to support staff at Barnet in a more holistic and robust way, avoiding assumptions supported by an evidence-based approach informed by qualitative and quantitative data.

At present 2.8% of our workforce identify as disabled. CMT supported by the Workforce EDI Steering Group are taking proactive action to increase representation of disabled people to closer reflect Barnet's disabled population of 14.9%. We see better representation within groups that identify as Black, Asian or Minoritised Ethnicities, of 35.3% which is in line with the London population of 35%. However, in order to achieve inclusion, we need to see representation at all levels of the organisation; at present there is greater representation of people who identify with a marginalised ethnicity at officer level. To ensure equity and access we will continue to create and tailor solutions to support the progression of staff from marginalised groups, including Mutual and Reverse Mentoring and Career coaching.

EDI Dashboard - Council Diversity 2021				
Service Area	NUMBER	COUNCIL %	Barnet population %	London population %
FEMALE	1167	59.2%	52%	52%
MALE	804	40.8%	48%	48%
BLACK, ASIAN, MINORITY ETHNIC	699	35.5%	40.3%	35%
DISABILITY	55	2.8%	14.9%	16%
LGBTQ+	70	3.6%	2.6%	2.6%

We report annually on our gender and ethnicity pay gap. At present 59.2% of our staff identify as female, slightly below the London council average of 60%. The national pay gap on average is 18% in favour of males, at Barnet we have a 12% pay gap in favour of females. However, the demographic of some service areas disproportionately impacts this, such as the Street Scene Workforce, which is made up of 424 non-managerial roles, 397 of those roles are currently filled by men.

Although there is a considerable amount of work to be done before we can achieve inclusion and equity at Barnet, we have seen a significant amount of progress in the last 12 months that has impacted all areas of the business, these changes and achievements include:

- Becoming a Level 2 Disability Confidence Employer, we are expected to achieve level 3 in Spring 2023.
- Implemented “Anonymised Recruitment” and reporting to capture its use and implementation across the organisation.
- Formalised Staff Resource Group and allocated a budget for the Groups to celebrate the beauty in differences, this has seen celebration, workshops and educational sessions on subjects spanning from Menopause to Diwali and will be a continued resources for staff.
- Completed the Stonewall Indices application providing Barnet a framework to improve its levels of inclusion alongside other trailblazing organisations in the UK.
- Launch our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training catalogue which is also accessible to our partners, Barnet Homes and Barnet Education and Learning Service, to ensure our frontline and senior staff are equipped to support the communities they serve.
- Implemented Disability Discrimination training as mandatory for all line managers to further destigmatise being Disabled at work and offer practical support and training to managers.
- Started our HR policy review, we are reviewing policies and guidance on: Maternity Leave, Parental Leave, Sickness and Absences, Menopause and Breast-feeding - prioritising supporting staff in an inclusive and holistic manner.

Over the next year we will build on the foundations of the EDI Action Plan with the stewardship of the Workforce EDI Steering Board and continued support and from the Council Management Team.

## Barnet Equality Allies

The Barnet Equality Allies Staff Resource Groups have been fundamental at progressing the EDI Workforce & Staff Agenda at Barnet. The Barnet Equality Allies (BEA) comprises of 7 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Each ERG is focused on supporting, celebrating, and raising awareness about specific social justice causes as well as the lived experience of staff who identify as having one or more protected characteristic. The BEA's goal is to be a strong voice in addressing structural and systemic discriminations and to bridge gaps enabling equality, diversity, and inclusion in our shared work environment

Over the last 12-months the Staff Resource Group lead by the BEA Leads have continued to progress the EDI agenda. By taking part in the Workforce EDI Steering Group as well as running the Staff Resources some of the fundamental achievements include:

- Hosted listening circles for staff on a variety of political, cultural and community issues including, access to abortions, menopause, Bisexual awareness and visibility, police brutality, the Iranian revolution and conflict in Ukraine, creating safe spaces where staff can discuss and share resources.
- Organised community celebrations including Barnet's largest internal celebration of Black History Month, A Pride Picnic, Eid lunch and the Diwali staff lunch.
- Launched the BEA mini library, creating access to literature by marginalised and underrepresented authors for our workforce.
- Reviewed and updated the Mandatory Disability Training to ensure it was inclusive and representative of staff at Barnet.
- Fed directly into the EDI Corporate Road Map.
- Advocated for Stonewall Indices application, which was completed and submitted with the support of the LGBTQ+ Staff Resources Group Leads.
- Initiated the policy review to support HR to create more representative and inclusive policies and processes.



## Next steps

Our current EDI policy was published in June 2021. As our understanding and implementation of EDI activity continues to evolve and mature, we have seen where we have gaps in our policy and delivery landscape and the challenge now is to establish ways of utilising the information to address issues in a systemic, structural approach. Our strategic framework is in a good place to deliver on our aims, with ongoing activity to develop our activity further, as outlined by this annual report.

However, we will refresh our EDI policy to ensure alignment with the development of the vision for the borough and the priorities set out in the new Corporate Plan. In short, it is an opportunity to provide a more consistent, resident facing policy approach as well as to incorporate the evolving employee facing outcomes.

The policy will focus on the culture change that is required to tackle the gaps (what do we know/what do we do/how do we do it/ how do we know we have got there) and what we mean by 'good'. Overall, it would set out our vision for integrating improving outcomes in everything that we do. Our residents will be at the core of this, and we are currently setting out plans for how we will develop the vision together with residents, communities and partners. Wherever we find that people have experienced inequality or disproportionate impact due to their characteristics we will work to tackle this and eradicate it. To align with the new governance structure, we propose that the policy/strategy is split between external facing policy focused residents, and separate reporting on our workforce policy.

To support the development of the resident focused EDI Policy, we will also be publishing a “State of the Borough” report, this will set out at more depth some of the themes that we have set out in report, building on our initial disproportionality study it will provide further insight from the census analysis and our local data sources as well as resident engagement activity and other information sources. This will build a more comprehensive picture of inequality in the Borough and start to inform our understanding of the structural drivers of inequality.

The draft EDI Policy will be presented for approval at April’s Policy & Resources Committee. To underpin the policy and the “State of the Borough” report, we will also report on our EDI Action Plans, that will set out what we will do address these challenges. We know that there is more to do, and that a joint approach to tackling the gaps is crucial for our development of EDI. We started the work reflecting inwards at our own service delivery; on who is accessing our services and what this tells us. We will continue to do so, but key to our next step is also to amplify our voice, building a dialogue with our residents, working with our partners and influencing the regional and national agenda.

In conjunction with this, we will continue to fight inequality, including through key activity such as:

- Continuing to embed EDI considerations into key policy development, such as our Sustainability Policy and implementation of our Community Safety Strategy.
- Delivering a comprehensive review of HR policies to ensure they protect, promote and celebrate our workforce.
- Implementing robust reporting metrics to track and progress the centring of both the resident and workforce focused EDI agendas in all areas of decision making and delivery.
- Continuing to address the cost-of-living crisis, including through rolling out; warm spaces; backend software that will help identify financial vulnerability; and phase 2 of our public awareness campaign which delivers targeted communications to low-income families, adults and vulnerable residents.
- Join-up of the ‘front door’ for residents and re-designing it to ensure those with more complex or multiple needs are provided a more proactive and personalised service.
- Driving work to close the gap in health inequalities between different communities - deliver SuperZones in Grahame Park and Burnt Oak schools; agree how to scale up health inequalities programme with Barnet Borough Partnership (integrated health and care partnership between NHS, LA and VCS) by using further data analyses on specific groups such as women’s health and premature mortality in young males under 19 years of age; deliver the initiatives that address health inequalities such as those described in Barnet Food Plan and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Programme; expand businesses engaging in Dementia Friendly Borough initiative and recruit Mental Health First Aiders Adults in the community.
- Delivering a wide-ranging equality and inclusion improvement programme across Mental Health services in partnership with NHS, in addition to NHS Talking Therapies for people with learning disabilities from BAME communities.
- Initiating a project with the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Voluntary and Community Sector to better understand and address safeguarding under reporting in some communities.
- Developing a cross council, evidence-based Disability Action Plan to bring together activity to improve services for disabled residents.
- Ensuring that Barnet’s communications to residents properly reflects the diverse communities that the council serves, through developing EDI communications guidance and embedding EDI as key consideration in all our communication activity.
- Development of a new Culture Strategy that aims to represent all voices of within the community and improve overall engagement with cultural activities within the borough, while also celebrating the cultures that currently exists within Barnet. The strategy will be co-produced with organisations and groups across the council. Linked to this, we will continue to promote and celebrate different groups via our emerging events programme.