



## EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2023

### INTRODUCTION

With people of many cultural backgrounds, faiths and life experiences living side by side, one of Barnet's biggest strengths is its diversity. We are proud of our diverse communities and of being a place where people feel welcomed and celebrated.

But not everyone's experience of Barnet is the same, with some finding it easier to access services and take advantage of opportunities. Some people face structural discrimination when institutional and other common practices within society disadvantage them across many aspects of their lives. Others face inequalities and social exclusion as a result of low income and poverty.

Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 sets out our vision for fighting poverty and tackling inequalities which affect everything from health and education to work opportunities. It also commits us to addressing these issues by actively listening to and considering different perspectives and needs in policy-making and service design.

We are currently preparing a new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to set out a new approach to addressing inequalities in the borough. However, this report provides an overview of the structures we have in place and the actions and activities that we have taken over the past 12 months to improve outcomes for our residents.

### OUR STATUTORY DUTIES

The Council has a number of legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, which provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

#### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

The public sector equality duty requires us 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; and
- foster good relations between people from different groups.

We comply with this duty by assessing the impact of our actions on different groups in the borough, including those identified in equality legislation as protected characteristics, namely age, race, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, sexual orientation and religion. In addition to assessing the impact of proposals on the nine protected characteristics, we may also assess the impact on certain other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, such as young carers, people with experience of living in care or those on low incomes.

### **Publication of Equality Information**

As part of the public sector equality duty, we have a specific duty to publish equality information about our employees and residents who share a protected characteristic. An overview of the characteristics of our residents can be found in the Barnet Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. We have also prepared a State of the Borough Report which provides a profile of Barnet's population and gives an overview of inequalities in the borough.

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

We undertake equality impact assessments on changes to policies or services that could have an impact on people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. These assessments are a way to make sure that we think carefully about the likely impact of decisions on different groups of people.

### **Strategic Equalities Objectives**

We are required to publish one or more strategic equalities objective to demonstrate how we intend to further the aims of the public sector equality duty. Our current overarching strategic equalities objective was updated in 2021 and is included in our Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy 2021-2025. It 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 are currently reviewing our strategic equalities objectives as part of the preparation of a new, externally focussed Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND GOVERNANCE**

Everyone has a part to play in advancing equalities, diversity and inclusion in Barnet and all staff are responsible for ensuring that we think about equalities in all that we do and how we deliver our services. 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.

Councillors set our strategic direction and are responsible for approving an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and ensuring that we adhere to it when making decisions. They also champion equalities in the communities they serve and celebrate diversity in their local areas.

The Council Management Team, which comprises the Chief Executive and his most senior directors, holds overall operational responsibility for equalities, diversity and inclusion. One director is the nominated lead for equalities and is responsible for overseeing our strategic direction on equalities and ensuring that we are all working together to deliver our objectives.

Our Tackling the Gaps: Fighting Inequality Group oversees 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 our decision-making. Our separate Workforce EDI Steering Group focuses on organisational and staff issues.

Barnet Equalities Allies is a network of staff who provide advice and challenge to the Council on equalities issues. They also facilitate staff networks, such as the Women's Network, Disability Network and Black Staff Resources and Action Group, together with 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 Tackling the Gaps Group and EDI Steering Group and contribute to our action plan.

The Strategy and Engagement Team is responsible for producing the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, action plan and annual report and leads on engagement with residents and our voluntary and community sector organisations. The Human Resources Team is responsible for promoting and embedding equalities, diversity and inclusion principles in the workforce and workplace.

We are committed to working in partnership with other organisations in the borough to ensure they share our ambitions for equality in Barnet. We maintain 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.

## **TACKLING THE GAPS: FIGHTING INEQUALITY**

Work is ongoing across the Council to shift our thinking, identify gaps and consider how we can tackle inequalities. This section outlines some of our key activity in 2023.

### **State of the Borough Report, Resident Engagement and New EDI Policy**

As part of the development of a new externally focussed EDI Policy, we prepared a State of the Borough report to start to build an understanding of residents' experiences of inequalities in Barnet and the impact. Bringing together different themes, it provides an overview of what inequalities look like in important aspects of their lives. This was the first report of its type for Barnet and we know that there are gaps in our knowledge with a lack of quality data being available at a local level.

The report highlights that people are shaped by a combination of multiple factors, including their age, disability, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation and socio-economic background. The causes of inequality are often inter-connected. Recognising “intersectionality” provides an opportunity to better understand the lived experience of residents and the issues they face.

We have also undertaken extensive resident engagement to inform the new EDI Policy. Over 200 residents participated in workshops and other activity from February to August 2023 and identified a number of key issues:

- ensure everyone can access services and prioritise supporting those most in need;
- use inclusive language, reflect Barnet’s diversity and promote EDI work;
- more community events and initiatives that foster community togetherness;
- education and training on EDI matters and ways to get involved; and
- protection against discrimination

Building on the initial sessions, a second phase of resident engagement is currently taking place using a mix of approaches to reach people with different protected characteristics. The final report on this phase will be produced in December 2023.

Taking the State of the Borough Report as an evidence base and using the outcomes of our engagement with residents and partners, we will refresh our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to demonstrate how we can work together to address inequalities and poverty. Emerging themes for our new approach include:

- becoming more person centred by improving our understanding of how combinations of equality characteristics influence residents’ experiences;
- improving our understanding of the structural, place-based drivers of inequalities; and
- considering environmental and sustainability issues from an equalities perspective to ensure that our journey to net zero takes place in a fair and inclusive way.

The new EDI Policy is scheduled for submission to the meeting of the Cabinet in February 2024.

### **Disability**

The 2021/22 Residents’ Perception Survey showed that disabled residents are significantly less likely to be satisfied across a number of key indicators compared to residents without a disability. To investigate these findings in-depth, the Tackling the Gaps Group commissioned Habitus, a specialised ethnographic research company, to conduct a study to understand the lived experiences of disabled residents.

The project set out to address the following objectives:

- To understand the lived experiences of disabled residents (and to some extent their families and carers) in engaging or accessing Council and community services.
- To explore how different protected characteristics and intersectionality shape disabled participants' lived experiences in engaging in community life.
- To identify barriers to participation in Council and community services.

Four recommendations were shaped by the disabled residents, parents, and carers who took part in the study:

- (1) Understanding how residents identify and want to be identified is key in meaningfully engaging with them.
- (2) Consider how disabled residents access information and find different modes of making this accessible.
- (3) Community matters – working with voluntary sector organisations can help disabled residents engage meaningfully in community life.
- (4) Create opportunities to enable disabled residents to engage in community life and civic participation in different ways.

The Tackling the Gaps Group is currently reviewing the recommendations to consider how the Council can best respond and the insights collected will support the development of the new EDI Policy and will feed into broader Council strategic objectives. In addition, Habitus has been commissioned to undertake an extension of the study to look into the experiences of children with disabilities.

### **Borough of Sanctuary**

In recent years, a large number of Ukrainians, Afghans, Hong Kongers and asylum seekers have been resettled and accommodated in Barnet. Since 2021, 64 Afghans have been resettled through the Afghan Resettlement Scheme and we have supported them with access to key services, such as housing, employment, ESOL and education. Alongside this, over the last 18 months, the Homes for Ukraine Team has welcomed 1,532 Ukrainians and have implemented a diverse package of support.

There are currently five hotels in Barnet being used by the Home Office to accommodate over 1,600 asylum seekers. Since 2020, the Council has commissioned two local voluntary organisations, New Citizens Gateway and Persian Advice Bureau, to provide support to residents in the hotels. This support includes ESOL classes, advice with asylum applications, support with school admissions and accessing healthcare. In addition, the Council has put in place specialist early help provision and health visiting services for families and children in the hotels as well as a comprehensive package of public health initiatives.

Since September 2021, Barnet has placed over 3,600 mainstream school-aged children from overseas in Barnet schools (approximately 35% secondary and 65% primary). In recognition

of challenges faced by schools where migrant children are enrolled after the October school census date, which results in lagged pupil funding allocations, the Council has been providing financial support to eligible schools. In November 2021, four Barnet schools with the highest number of children living in designated hotels for asylum seekers were allocated a share of £50,000 from the Council's Covid grant scheme. In January 2022, a further £1m was set aside from the underspend of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to support schools that enrolled children from the asylum hotels and those who had arrived under the Hong Kong BNO Scheme.

The Council is also responsible for overseeing the cases of a number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, including recruiting foster carers from a diverse range of backgrounds and offering a variety of emotional and physical well-being provision. The Barnet UASC Team, along with our education service, hosted onsite ESOL classes for 12 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people between March and June 2023. This special ESOL course offered tailored teaching to the group, providing a high level of support to everyone. It also provided a safe space for these young people to work on their social skills, build informal support networks and develop a sense of belonging within their peer group.

We have developed and started to deliver the Asylum Seeker Health Action Plan to support the health of new arrivals into Barnet. Current action includes:

- Establishment of a Migrant Health Champion role to identify, amplify and support action to address migrant health needs.
- Securing funding from the NHS to:
  - co-produce a welcome pack (designed for those at contingency hotels for information on local services (health, VCS, social) and translated into eight commonly spoken languages;
  - ESOL lessons for health;
  - dental health packs distributed to asylum seekers (every 4 months) with educational material on dental/oral health;
  - SafeTALK training to frontline hotel and VCS staff (specifically suicide prevention);
  - outbreak prevention support: mainly posters/leaflets to support behaviour change or vaccination support;
  - cook and communicate sessions aimed at those based in catered accommodation for an opportunity to socialise and cook nutritious and culturally appropriate food; and

- setting up a task and finish group to improve delivery of childhood immunisations, initially focussed on the contingency hotel with the highest numbers of asylum seekers, which is also linked to the GP practice with one of the lowest childhood immunisation coverages.

In June 2023, the Council marked Refugee Week for the first time and worked closely with voluntary organisations and residents to celebrate the chosen theme of ‘compassion’. Throughout the week, the Council amplified the work of City of Sanctuary UK as well as that of local organisations, such as New Citizens Gateway, through internal and external communications.

In recognition of the long history that Barnet has of welcoming those fleeing displacement, in January 2023, the Council passed a motion to become a Borough of Sanctuary. Borough of Sanctuary is an accreditation awarded by City of Sanctuary UK to organisations who go above and beyond to welcome those fleeing forced displacement. City of Sanctuary UK is an umbrella organisation whose mission is to provide coordination and development support for networks of organisations supporting people seeking sanctuary.

Since the motion to become a Borough of Sanctuary was passed, in addition to the ongoing delivery of services for refugees and asylum seekers, the Council joined the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network and has engaged with refugees and asylum seekers to develop a Borough of Sanctuary Strategy. The strategy sets out our vision for Barnet to sustain a community and environment where every sanctuary seeker feels valued and supported. It commits the Council to embodying the values of City of Sanctuary UK in our work with asylum seekers and refugees, namely inclusiveness, openness, participation, inspiring and integrity.

The approved Borough of Sanctuary Strategy will guide our approach to working with sanctuary seekers across all service areas and will be used as the baseline for the development of an organisation-wide action plan. This will be used to ensure that in the delivery of council services, the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants will be taken into account and efforts will be taken to consult and engage with a diverse range of groups on a variety of issues.

### **Public Health**

The 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, males living in Burnt Oak are likely to live 7.4 years less and females 8.8 years less than those living in Hampstead Garden Suburb. Those living in the 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 [Director of Public Health’s Annual Report 2023](#), ‘Mind the Health Gap in Barnet’ presents evidence of health inequalities, the causes of these and work that is taking place to reduce health inequalities in the borough. The Barnet Health Inequalities Steering Group oversees some of this work, and two priority areas for 2023 are cardiovascular disease

prevention and increasing the uptake of childhood immunisations. Examples of projects implemented and delivered over the last 12 months are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

The Health Champions programme continues to be delivered with 280 residents from across the borough and from different demographic backgrounds providing information to their communities around health and wellbeing issues, such as cardiovascular diseases prevention and childhood immunisation. In 2023/24, we have also trained a first group of six residents to be Mental Health Champions. They will work to help other residents understand the symptoms of poor mental health, where people can get support and what residents can do to promote their own mental health and wellbeing

Part of the Barnet Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention Action Plan is the Healthy Heart Programme. This is a peer support programme working with people in African, Caribbean and South Asian communities that aims to raise awareness of CVD risk factors and encourage people to come forward to health checks screening in the community. Since the last equalities report, we have completed Year 1 of the programme and 402 people received brief and extended brief interventions and 123 people attended at least one of the workshops or multi-session groups. From the evaluation of the group sessions, participants reported that they had learnt about increasing physical activity, reducing salt intake and other dietary changes to promote heart health and using the local pharmacy to support blood pressure monitoring. The most common behaviour change that was reported in response to attending the session was reducing salt in food and participants also reported that they had shared what they learnt with their immediate family.

Community Health Screening provided by GPDQ Ltd works to complement NHS Health Checks in Barnet and is in Year 2 of delivery. Community Health Screening is offered in areas where there are higher levels of deprivation and where people are more likely to be living with cardiovascular disease. In Year 1 from April 2022 to April 2023, a total of 976 people were seen over the 48 sessions delivered. About 40% of people seen were sign-posted to their GP for further investigations.

Work on suicide prevention continues to have an impact. Since 2015, the death rate in Barnet has significantly reduced, with the rate for women's lives lost decreasing from 5.0 (2014-16) to 2.8 per 100,000 (2018-2020) and the rate for men falling from 8.8 (2018-2020) to 7.0 (2019 – 2021). Our extensive suicide prevention campaign aimed at working-aged men was awarded the 2023 UKPHR Chamberlain-Dunn Award for Best Digital Initiative. 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 Man Club locally. The app reached over 100,000 people, with digital content displayed online over two million times. Andy's Man Club attendees reported that the initiative allowed them to express thoughts and emotions that they would have otherwise not spoken about.

The main event at the Black History Month in Barnet was held on 29 October 2023 with a panel discussion on health inequalities. Communities highlighted their experience of structural discrimination within public services as an obstacle to timely access to care. It was



agreed to use existing action plan frameworks, such as the one from [ADPH London Action Tackling Racism and Inequality Plan | ADPH London](#) in Barnet and agree tangible actions to be implemented locally and in co-production with our communities under the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **Communities, Adults and Health**

Our vision is that all residents of Barnet have a high-quality, inclusive experience of our spaces and services. We are actively working to remove or overcome any barriers that get in the way of this. Our work on improving equity in experience and outcomes actively seeks out and listens to people who may experience inequity and informs our learning and future action.

#### Adult Social Care

To ensure that we are routinely capturing the views of the residents we support and using this to learn and develop, we are rolling out routine feedback surveys after working with a resident. The types of questions being asked include:

- the practitioner treated me with respect and as an individual;
- the plan I developed with my practitioner helps me live the life I want and do things that are important to me;
- I was given information that is correct, up to date and in a way that I understand;  
and
- overall, I felt satisfied with the assessment and care planning process.

Up to end October 2023, we have received 78 responses to the surveys. Residents report very positive experiences of working with our social workers, occupational therapists and other practitioners, being involved in their care planning, information and advice and overall satisfaction. We are sharing specific feedback and learning with individual practitioners and team managers, as well as building thematic learning into our continual improvement plans. An example of where we are responding to feedback from residents is our work to identify a number of staff in each service area to act as autism champions, providing expertise and support to all staff when working with autistic adults. The champions are receiving training and guidance, including from autistic adults.

We have also been delivering cultural competence training to staff this year with a focus on written documents more specifically recording the cultural needs of residents who receive care and support services.

We have been taking steps to realise our aspiration to work more effectively at a neighbourhood level to ensure that our preventative offer is truly reflective of local diversity. An example of this is the Wellbeing Café pilot recently commissioned specifically for the residents of Grahame Park, a space where people with particular mental health needs can discuss their challenges and be signposted to available local services.

## Greenspaces and Leisure

Over the last 12 months, the Fit and Active in Barnet (FAB) workstream has continued to deliver targeted programmes of activity specifically designed to reach new audiences and encourage them to adopt a healthy and physically active lifestyle. The overall strategy and annual implementation plan is managed through a board of partners and stakeholders across Barnet. Examples of initiatives include a series of celebratory campaigning days with events designed to promote physical activity planned around national campaigns such as international women's day and older person's day and ongoing activities supporting people with disabilities. 40,000 people have registered for the FAB card and we are developing a FAB information hub signposting people to activities.

In August 2023, the Council and Middlesex FA ran a Women and Girls Football Festival that included a screening of the World Cup Final. Over 250 participants attended. We recognise the female game is growing and participation numbers will continue to rise. It is estimated that numbers will rise by 400% in the next 10 years. Therefore, there remains a commitment to provide women and girls with further opportunities to get active and give football a go in Barnet as we continue to work closely with the Middlesex FA to deliver legacy sessions.

In leisure centres, the programmes and facilities continue to evolve and provide activities designed to appeal to all sections of the community. Of special note is the installation of a sensory teaching pool at New Barnet, the fact that we have poolpods at all our swimming pools and that Copthall and New Barnet are accredited as dementia friendly. A 'changing places' facility has been installed at Finchley Lido and there is inclusive accredited gym equipment at every facility.

We have been working with members of the Seneca Trust and our playground provider, Kompan, to design and deliver the UK's first fully inclusive playground that is designed for everyone of all cognitive and physical abilities to play together. Work has started on the scheme and there will be a formal launch and opening event in the Spring.

Our refreshed tree planting equity model looks at current canopy cover in streets and takes a more nuanced approach. Our previous policy concentrated on air quality and urban heat, but we have now developed a more sophisticated model. John Rose from Treeconomics has been promoting this as one of the first true social value tree planting strategies that has been produced.

## **Children and Young People**

Children and young people across all cohorts perform better than the London and England average in school. Barnet is ranked as the third best local authority in the country by Attainment 8 score (a measure based on students' attainment in their best eight subjects at GCSE) and second best by Progress 8 score (a measure of progress made by students during their time at secondary school).

However, there are education and attainment disparities across ethnicities. In England, London and all North London local authorities, black pupils on average have a slightly lower

Attainment 8 score (a measure that is based on students' attainment in their best eight subjects at GCSE) than white pupils. In comparison, Asian and Chinese pupils have higher attainment scores in comparison to white pupils. Furthermore, boys and pupils of black and mixed ethnicity are more likely to have one or more fixed term exclusions. There is ongoing work addressing attainment and school exclusion gaps in schools, which was strengthened by forming an Equality Exclusions and Attendance Board, a sub-board of the Schools and Settings Standards Partnership Board.

Ongoing work to close exclusion gaps includes:

- specialist training packages to schools and school governors on outreach programmes and mentoring packages to reduce the risk of a fixed term suspension becoming a permanent exclusion;
- requirement for an at risk of exclusion notification to enable agencies to agree a wraparound package of support and identify an alternative route to exclusion through an urgent annual review;
- intervention and transition between schools for managed moves to a new school;

Barnet has a good track record with regards to permanently excluded pupils being reintegrated back into mainstream school, with approximately 80% of pupils being reintegrated annually.

There were 499 looked-after children in Barnet in total during 2022-23. Black boys are 3.2 times more likely to be represented in this cohort than white boys. Boys from other ethnic groups (2.6) and a mixed or multiple ethnic background (2.2) are also over-represented. Black girls are 2.7 more likely to be in the looked-after group, followed by those from a mixed or multiple ethnic background (2.0) and other ethnic groups (1.4). The Council has recognised that care leavers face discrimination and disadvantage that impacts them throughout their lives and is planning to treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic as part of its new EDI Policy. We will also ask the Council to sign-up to the Care Leaver Covenant, which is a promise made by private, public and voluntary organisations to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.

### **Homelessness**

Barnet Homes has undertaken a Homelessness Early Intervention and Prevention Insight Project focussing on homelessness prevention activities taking place across the borough. The project engaged service leaders from over 20 organisations and included interviews with a cross-section of vulnerable clients who had experience of passing through Barnet Homes Housing Options Service.

Themes relating to disproportionality for specific groups were clear. In particular, mental health was found to have major effects on an individual's housing journey and often

contributed to poor outcomes such as homelessness, loss of tenancies, breakdown in communication with services and unsuitable accommodation placements.

In addition, the successful operation of early intervention and prevention support is limited by persisting barriers to accessing services, which can directly cause housing issues to grow. Digital barriers, language barriers and mobility issues all disproportionately impacted certain groups.

Disproportionality studies undertaken to inform the project showed an over-representation of black people and those with disabilities (particularly mental health) approaching Barnet Homes as homeless.

The results will be considered in the review of the Housing, Homeless and Rough Sleeping and Customer Experience Strategies, with action planning in progress focused on:

- Increasing application support.
- Introducing trauma informed service delivery by rolling out training to improve the quality of support.
- Reviewing housing support pathways, including developing and improving in-reach with prisons and hospitals.
- Strengthening targeted intervention by continued analysis of the structural drivers of homelessness.

Progress on the implementation of these recommendations is reported to the Tackling the Gaps Group.

### **Cost of Living, Poverty and Employment**

The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on all our residents, but making things much more difficult for some, especially the most vulnerable. A targeted approach to supporting these residents was introduced in October 2022 following approval by the former Policy and Resources Committee.

We introduced a new [financial support calculator](#) to help residents easily identify any unclaimed benefits they may be eligible for, such as universal credit, disability benefits and pension credit. The calculator has Google translate embedded and is available in all languages listed in Barnet's 2021 Census, plus many more.

We also introduced an online application process for discretionary support, including Discretionary Housing Payments, Resident Support Fund and Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief, ensuring we are providing both direct and indirect support to residents who are experiencing financial vulnerabilities. Over £2.4m of support has been awarded since the launch in October 2022.

November 2023 will see the launch of outreach drop-in sessions to further support residents, providing much needed in-person advice and support with the application process and use of our calculator to ensure they are maximising their income.

Barnet has now become an affiliated partner of the Money and Pensions Services' Money Advice Network, a national debt referral programme where residents can access free specialist debt advice. We will be launching this in December 2023 and collaboration is underway with all resident focused services.

A [report](#) was submitted to Cabinet in October 2023 on actions taken by the Council and future plans to reduce poverty and tackle inequalities in the borough. Alongside the continued delivery of our programme to support residents through the cost-of-living crisis, this will include initiatives on employment support and skills, community wealth-building, securing social value through procurement and becoming a living wage borough.

BOOST provides an employment, financial and digital support service for Barnet residents. It continues to expand its geographical coverage of the borough with services now available from locations in Chipping Barnet, Burnt Oak, Finchley and Cricklewood, with further plans for delivery from Edgware, The Grange and Stone Grove. Currently, three-quarters of its clients are seeking help with the cost-of-living and in-work poverty, with the remainder requiring support with employment and skills.

The service has recruited a new Disability Employment Coordinator to work with partners to establish an employment network for people with disabilities in Barnet and offer individual support for referred clients. In addition, a Primary Care Individual Placement and Support representative has been co-located with services at Burnt Oak with the aim of increasing our ability to identify and support local people with disabilities and long-term health conditions towards employment. BOOST has also taken on a third specialist adviser to work with Ukrainian refugees.

The Afghan Refugees Resettlement Project is currently providing support services to 13 families (49 individuals), including help with finances, benefits, accommodation, employment and registering for services such as schools and healthcare.

### **Environment and Sustainability**

We have an ambitious sustainability programme to work with local people, communities, and businesses across the borough to reach net zero carbon emissions in Barnet by 2042, and for the Council by 2030. The wide-ranging scale of the sustainability programme and the variety of actions that we support mean that proper consideration of equality issues is integral to ensuring the drive towards sustainability is an inclusive and equitable one for all residents. We recognise that the impacts of climate change and the sustainable solutions needed to mitigate them have disproportionate impacts on certain groups.

Taking the views of residents into account ensures that our journey to net zero is in genuine partnership with the community and highlights opinions and concerns that are representative of the diversity of the borough. The Citizens' Assembly and Young People's Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity took place earlier this year and was

successfully completed with 20 recommendations presented to the Council. A response to these recommendations will be published in the third quarter of 2023/24. One of the recommendations from the Assembly focused on 'learning and engagement' and the action plan will be developed with participants from the Assembly.

The sustainability programme is keeping residents engaged with our journey to net zero through the BarNET ZERO communications campaign, engaging residents and highlighting where they can get involved.

In recognition of the impacts of sustainable solutions across different groups, an equalities impact assessment is being prepared for the sustainability programme to understand who could experience disproportionate impacts from our actions and how to make adjustments in recognition of this. For example, in developing schemes to reduce private car use to decrease carbon emissions, adjustments must be made for those with complex mobility needs or disabilities who have a high reliance on car use. Equalities impact assessments for specific projects are being developed to assess concerns on a case-by-case basis.

In February 2023, Street Scene (at their Oakleigh Road depot premises) launched Race Equality Week (REW) at the Council where senior management listened to and engaged with staff about their experiences and concerns relating to race and equalities, diversity and inclusion. This event gave a voice to employees and initiated the conversation about how the Council could work collaboratively to ensure our workplace is inclusive and one where people feel respected, valued and psychologically safe. Senior management committed to improving EDI within Street Scene by embedding specific activities into the service business plans, including:

- creating safe and anonymous mechanisms for people to raise issues about EDI;
- developing a Street Scene EDI communications and events calendar;
- creating an EDI policy framework for Street Scene; and
- data analysis of distribution of Street Scene services to identify disproportionality within the borough.

Over the past nine months, Street Scene has been rolling out a series of EDI workshops to help improve the working culture and provide a forum for developing proposals and delivering change together. This has also been enhanced by an anonymous suggestion box (which is accessible physically and virtually).

Street Scene also launched the Council's Black History month events which included a visit by Errol McKellar MBE. Errol engaged staff in his prostate cancer survival journey (which is more likely to affect black men) and urged them to get tested. Street Scene is exploring the option of providing PSA tests to staff in the workplace through its health and wellbeing programme. The programme also provides all staff access to online talks and in-person workshops that relate to both physical and mental health topics (with the aim to improve health in both personal and work environments).

Going forward, Street Scene will be engaging with Barnet's central Insight and Intelligence team to continue trend analysis of service distribution.

### **Culture**

Equality, diversity, and inclusion have been a central consideration throughout the development of the new Culture Strategy. As part of our commitment to community-driven strategy development, we convened an external steering group tasked with shaping every facet of the strategy. This group comprises a variety of individuals from the cultural and creative sectors, in addition to participants from the voluntary sector and members of our local community. Throughout the selection process, we placed a significant emphasis on upholding the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that the voices of underrepresented groups found a prominent place within discussions.

A key priority for the consultation and engagement programme was to encompass the voices of all Barnet residents. To achieve this, we disseminated our survey through various voluntary sector organisations that advocate for groups that are underrepresented. We also conducted workshops in areas where communities with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds reside. A concerted effort was made to engage with all communities across the borough as part of the programme. After analysing the data gathered from the responses, we believe that broadly speaking our data accurately reflects the diversity of the borough. We have representation from all the protected characteristics within the responses.

A significant component of the Culture Strategy will be centred on local communities and the celebration of the unique diversity that characterises Barnet as a thriving multicultural area. The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion will be prominent throughout.

### **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 to 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 roadmap which is tracked and monitored by the Workforce EDI Steering Group to create organisational transparency and accountability. In the roadmap, we have identified ten key reporting goals to publish progress to internal audiences every spring, creating organisational wide accountability and reaffirming our commitment to putting EDI at the centre of everything we do.

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 EDI dashboard breakdowns data in line with other London councils and the Office of National Statistics. However, 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. This will enable us to support staff at Barnet in a more holistic and robust way supported by an evidence-based approach informed by qualitative and quantitative data.

In 2020, 2.8% of our workforce identified as disabled. As at April 2023, we have increased representation to 6.7%. We are taking a 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. This year, we established that we need to have a target to increase representation of black staff specifically above a Grade 7 to ensure we have representative leadership teams.

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.

We report annually on our gender and ethnicity pay gap. At present, 59% 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 11.8% 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 429 non-managerial roles with 401 (93.5%) of those roles 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:

- Launched the menopause policy, guidance and resources to better support staff impacted by menopause at work.



- Further built on the progress of “Anonymised Recruitment” and reporting to capture better learnings and create directorate specific training plans.
- Launched the Cultural Learning Log to capture experiences and incidents of micro-aggressions to ensure people experiencing incidents have access to support, as well as being able to educate and eradicate incidents of micro-aggression within the business.
- Launched our EDI Depot training schedule in response to the Race Equality Week feedback from the Street Cleansing Operatives, Ground Maintenance, and Passenger Service Assistant teams which seeks to address equality within our frontline services.
- Completed the Anti-Racist London Pilot and established clear metrics on the representation of staff that identify as black or having black heritage within the business.

### **Barnet Equality Allies**

The Barnet Equality Allies Staff Resource Groups have been fundamental in progressing the EDI Workforce and Staff Agenda at Barnet. The Barnet Equality Allies (BEA) comprises seven Staff Networks (SN). Each SN 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 discrimination 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 has continued to progress the EDI agenda. By taking part in the Workforce EDI Steering Group, some key achievements include:

- Delivered a range of staff led events including Diwali, Passover, Black History Month, South Asian Heritage month, International Womens Day and more.
- Hosted staff safe space to share lived experiences and encourage learning and understanding through the power of storytelling, including Menopause Lean-in Circles, Police brutality, VAWG (violence against women and girls), Transphobia and a range of issues impacting the collective well-being of staff.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Using the State of the Borough Report and the outcome of our engagement activity with residents, we are currently refreshing our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to ensure it is properly aligned with the vision for the borough and the priorities set out in Our Plan for Barnet. This will introduce a more person-centred approach to addressing inequalities, improve our understanding of the structural, place-based drivers of inequalities and ensure that our transition to net zero takes place in a fair and inclusive way. The new policy is scheduled for consideration by the Cabinet in February 2024.