

A New Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy for Barnet



APPENDIX 3

EDI Policy Engagement Findings Phase 1 (Feb – Aug 2023)

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Introduction and Context

- This presentation reports on the main findings from a series of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) workshops delivered in February – March 2023. This research was led by the Strategy and Engagement Team.
- The insights gathered from engaging with a range of stakeholders will help inform the Council's new EDI policy (external facing).
- The Council wants to build Barnet into a strong cohesive community, where diversity is celebrated, and everyone has equal opportunity regardless of their background.
- The significance of recent changes has validated the need to refresh our current EDI policy to align with the vision and priorities in the new Corporate Plan.

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Approach and Methodology

- The Strategy and Engagement team worked with a range of stakeholders (internal and external) to develop the engagement method and discussion guide.
- The workshops explored several areas including common EDI terms, experiences of discrimination and EDI priorities for Barnet. Where possible, the workshops ensured views of participants could be understood by location and protected characteristics.
- Workshops were widely promoted on Engage Barnet, Comms channels, internal teams and external partners (e.g. Barnet Together Alliance and The Barnet Group).
- Five workshops were delivered during the period with 102 people participating:
 - Resident workshop on 28 February (33 residents)
 - Resident virtual workshop on 2 March (18 residents)
 - Barnet Mencap workshop led by Adult Services on 9 March (10 residents)
 - VCS workshop on 13 March, (24 people)
 - Young peoples workshop on 20 March (17 young residents)

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Profile of residents: 70% female, 40% with disability and 50% from Chipping Barnet Constituency

Age	Total
11-17	17
18-34	7
35-44	11
45-54	13
55-64	12
65+	8

Sexual Orientation	Total
Bisexual	2
Gay or Lesbian	3
Other	2
Heterosexual	40
Prefer not to say	4

Gender	Total
Male	18
Female	48
Prefer not to say	2

Disability	Total
Yes	31
No	47

Ethnicity	Total
Asian	22
Black	6
Mixed	3
Other	2
White	33
Prefer not to say	2

Religion	Total
Buddhist	3
Christian	12
Hindu	6
Jewish	4
Muslim	6
No religion	13
Prefer not to say	7

Constituency	Total
Chipping Barnet	25
Finchley and Golders Green	12
Hendon	13

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BARNET

Living in Barnet: what residents like/dislike about the borough

Theme	Like	Dislike
Environment	<i>“The green spaces, the geography/topography of the landscape” – Female, 45-54, Black British, Brunswick Park</i>	<i>“litter, dirty streets, dirty park area especially around playground for children” – Female, 65-74, Asian / Asian British – Bangladeshi, Colindale</i>
Transport	<i>“Transport links are superb” – Male, 55-64, White British, Hendon</i>	<i>“Travel options limited East vs West, parking restrictions in key high streets...no free off street parking near me” - Female, 45-54, Asian / Asian British – Bangladeshi, Brunswick Park</i>
Safety	<i>“feels a bit safer than other boroughs for families” – aged 25-34, Asian / Asian British – Chinese, Colindale</i>	<i>“Can be intimidating people at time, hence would be nice to see more police presence especially around tube stations” Male, 35-44, White, Hendon</i>
Community	<i>“We have a very unique and diverse culture” – Male, 25-34, Black African, Friern Barnet</i>	<i>“Lack of inclusion of elderly and disabled [people] in their life choices, vast inequalities between richest and poorest” –Female, 45-54, White British, High Barnet</i>
	<i>“Like a village feel, community, friendly” – Female, 65-74, White British, East Finchley</i>	<i>“Lack of communications, knowing what is going on in the borough”</i>
Education	<i>“Good schools” – Female, 55-64, Asian / Asian British – Indian, Underhill</i>	<i>‘lack of special education needs schools’ - Female, 44-54, White British, West Finchley</i>
Housing	<i>“Houses rather than high rises” – Male, 65-74, West Finchley</i>	<i>“Over intensification of built up area in Hendon. Hendon + Colindale have little to no input from Barnet [Council]” – Male, 35-44, Asian / Asian British – Indian, West Hendon</i>

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Insights on the meaning of common EDI terms

- **Equality:** most people were familiar with the term and provided similar definitions.

“Equality is treating everyone the same regardless of characteristics.”
- Male, 25-34, Asian / Asian British
– Indian, West Finchley

“Equality means creating opportunities and lowering barriers to entry” - Male, 55-64, White British, Golders Green

“Equal opportunities doesn’t always mean treating everyone the same. Sometimes groups require more resources than others to access equal opportunities.” – VCS workshop

- **Diversity:** comments ranged from recognising and respecting differences to celebrating them. Several reflections that diversity is merely “a tick box for organisations” if it’s not backed by meaningful actions

“[Diversity means] many different people from different backgrounds, races and beliefs coming together –
Male, 14-15, Asian / Asian British – Indian, Woodhouse

“Diversity needs to be more than just visible. Just celebrating days and months is not good enough. Speak up, don’t be a bystander.” – Female, 18-24, Asian, Underhill

“Giving everyone a seat at the table – having good representation across the board (from top to bottom)” – VCS workshop

- **Inclusion:** participants provided similar responses centred around ‘putting words into action’ to ensure everyone can be involved, but exceptions were mentioned

“Ensuring everyone can participate – a sense of togetherness. Not leaving anyone isolated.”- Female, 18-24, Asian / Asian British – Bangladeshi, East Barnet”

“Not everyone should be included in everything -some services need to be exclusive to certain people, i.e., religion /faith based; Sex based” - 45-55, White British, East Finchley

“Reaching out to the community to let know there’s opportunities to be more included and not always waiting for them to come to us” – VCS workshop

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- **Equity:** participants were less familiar with this term and how it differs from ‘equality’. Some posted/described an image to illustrate the differences or searched for definitions online.

*“Equity = equality”
– young person,
aged 11-17*

*“Fellow residents were particularly talking extensively about the distinction between equity and equality and I felt there was a disagreement on those topics which creates barrier to move forward and discuss what action or plans need to be done.”
– Male, 35-44, White, Colindale*

*“Giving someone a step ladder, putting people in a position to be able to compete. Need real life examples to visualise what we are trying to achieve.”
– Female, 35-44, Black African, Colindale*

- **Further reflections on language:** words mentioned often in discussions include fairness, respect, representation, community, belonging and access. There was a general agreement that the EDI policy should be ‘easy to understand and visual’.

“On the language we are using in this discussion ... most people won't know or care what we are on about. There is far too much jargon” – Female, 55-64, White British, High Barnet

““..My perspective as a resident is don't get too hung up about the terms , just deliver the outcomes. If you think people won't understand the words in the policy, just give examples.” – Female, White - Turkish / Turkish Cypriot, 55-64, Whetstone

“Fairness and belonging should be part of the EDI policy locally. Also, focus on equality of opportunity and not of outcome will ensure equity for all” – VCS workshop

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Differences and discrimination: summary of the views and experiences shared

- Acknowledgment that anyone can be discriminated against but some are more susceptible. Often listed the Equality Act protected characteristics without promoting.
- Other types of discrimination mentioned include social class, language, long-term illness and unnecessary stipulations e.g. requiring a certain qualification to get a job.
- Some participants recounted times when they experienced and/or witnessed unfair treatment. Note some examples were from experiences outside the borough.
- Young people emphasised the impact of social media and that it normalises discriminatory behaviours, branding them as ‘jokes’, which young people emulate.
- Although there was support for championing EDI principles, discussions highlighted competing beliefs among groups and the need to tactfully address nuanced topics.

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Differences and discrimination quotes

Broadly speaking, comments related to unfair treatment were caused by assumptions about visible characteristics and/or failure to recognise less visible ones.

“Many physically disabled people in wheelchairs cannot get into buildings, shops, meetings, organisations to be able to participate”

“Discrimination is all about money/status, POVERTY. The other in ethnic minority should have a space to identify not a tick box.”

‘Bullied at school/local area due to weight and background (Hungarian). Often wake up extra early to avoid bullies on way to school.’

“Acts of racism within communities. taxis not picking up me and my boyfriend (interracial gay couple)”

..”lack of women-only facilities at New Barnet Better swimming pool. The showers and cubicles have big gaps at top and bottom, which as a woman makes me feel vulnerable...Muslim and orthodox Jewish women would not be able to swim there due to the proximity to men.”

“I haven’t felt discriminated against in Barnet - but I am a white woman (a lot of privileges) and do not outwardly look Muslim or queer (both of which I am). I can easily hide/disguise these characteristic – and I do on purpose - out of fear I think”

“Lack of inclusion of neurodiversity and disability. Not sufficient funding for children's yp to access psychology education assessments”

“I have seen twice in the Post office when customers been told to go back to their home country”

“[At a swim pool outside Barnet] General Manager stopped me swimming to ask who gave me permission to wear modest swim wear outfit! I felt small”

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Summary of priorities for the EDI Policy

EDI Priority Theme	Quotes from participants
<p>Access to services: ensure everyone can access service and prioritise supporting those most in need, e.g. people who not can access online services</p>	<p><i>“Let people have the same opportunity to access information / services without any barriers. Offer priority support to those most in need to ensure inclusion and equity”</i></p> <p><i>“Website to have an easily found directory of services with their contacts”</i></p>
<p>Communication: use inclusive language, reflect Barnet’s diversity & promote EDI work</p>	<p><i>“Translate the jargon into [plain] English first please!”</i></p> <p><i>“Barnet Council to be proactive and take positive actions for a more proportionate representation of local communities”</i></p> <p><i>“Make it obvious to Barnet residents that these conversations are happening”</i></p>
<p>Community events: more initiatives that foster community togetherness</p>	<p><i>“Bringing communities together and continuous dialogue with community groups and residents once the EDI strategy is in place (not just the discussions now)”</i></p>
<p>Education/Training: ways to learn about on EDI matters and get involved</p>	<p><i>“Advocacy/champions in the borough”</i></p>
<p>Protection against discrimination: ideas include increasing Police presence, heavier sanctions and re-educating offenders</p>	<p><i>‘Commitment borough wide including schools .. to tackling racism, homophobia, toxic masculinity.’</i></p>

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EDI vision for Barnet

Proposed by..	In the future, we want..	We will know we have made a difference because...
Residents	<i>“People to feel respected, understood, celebrated, educated, heard and included.</i>	<i>“There will be harmony, peace + a strong sense of community where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil and achieve their potential.”</i>
Residents	<i>“People to feel ownership and empowered to be able to engage + contribute to the full diverse community.”</i>	<i>“Residents enjoy well being and see themselves represented at every level in the Council.”</i>
Residents at Barnet Mencap	<i>“[The Borough to be] more inclusive / respectable to all communities and [Barnet Council] to actually do what they say – follow up on actions!”</i>	<i>There will be more caring people and a better atmosphere where everyone is [considered] normal / ordinary – even people with disabilities</i>
VCS session	<i>“everyone to feel that Barnet is their home and part of the community”</i>	<i>“everyone should feel part of the community. No one should feel like a second class citizen”</i>
Young people	<i>‘people to be more opened minded, educated about different cultures/beliefs, feel safer and not feel like outliers because of a specific different trait they have’</i>	<i>we will see ideas not repeated in sessions like these often and inequality would stop</i>

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Emerging recommendations to date

The findings from this engagement should be considered with other insights to enhance the Council's approach to EDI. Key recommendations include:

- **EDI Policy:** keep it simple, visual and accessible while addressing EDI priorities
- **Accountability:** produce and publish an EDI action plan, implement robust processes to monitor progress.
- **Research:** adopt an evidence based approach to identify and support those most in need, bringing in specialist advice where necessary.
- **Embed engagement:** raise greater awareness of the EDI work and consistently involve residents, living the Community Participation Strategy.
- **Partnerships:** work closely with VCS organisations, businesses, schools, police, NHS and other partners to improve EDI in the borough.

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EDI Policy Engagement Phase 2 (Sept – Dec 2023)

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Introduction and Context

- This presentation reports on the phase 2 engagement (Sept – Dec 2023) which gathered views on possible EDI themes, priorities, vision and inclusive language.
- This builds on the insights from phase 1 (Feb - Aug 2023), reinforcing the council's commitment to co-producing the new policy.
- Resident workshops were promoted on Engage Barnet, Comms channels, internal teams and external partners. There was also a focus on engaging with under-represented groups.
- Eight resident workshops were delivered during the period with 80 people participating:
 - Resident workshop on 17 Oct (26 residents)
 - Young peoples workshop on 23 Oct (13 residents)
 - Resident virtual workshops in Nov (18 residents)
 - Young peoples workshop led by F.U.S.E Youth Project on 27 Nov (7 residents)
 - LGBTQ+ communities workshop led by Inkluder in Nov (8 residents)
 - Barnet Mencap workshop on 7 Dec (8 residents)

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Profile of residents: 70% female, 25 % with disability and 25% aged 11 – 17 years old

Age	Total
11-17	20
18-34	5
35-44	11
45-54	11
55-64	11
65+	6
Unknown	16

Sexual Orientation	Total
LGBT	13
Heterosexual	36
Unknown	32

Gender	Total
Male	21
Female	49
Unknown	10

Ethnicity	Total
Asian	24
Black	7
Other	1
White	30
Unknown	18

Disability	Total
Mobility	5
Reduced physical capacity	7
Vision	2
Mental illness	3
Hearing	1
Physical co-ordination	1
Learning difficulties	5

Religion	Total
Buddhist	2
Christian	14
Hindu	5
Jewish	4
Muslim	10
No religion	12
Unknown	7

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General insights from the EDI phase 2 engagement

- Demonstrating how EDI is woven into the Corporate priorities of ‘caring for people, place and planet’ solidifies the Council’s commitment to driving equality.
- Recognising that EDI is a multifaceted topic that evokes various emotions, it is crucial to clearly articulate the purpose and scope of the policy e.g. responsibilities, timeframe and resources.
- Although there is general support for the emerging EDI themes and priorities, concrete actions need to be outlined to make the ambitions real and get residents fully on board.

“So you've got the vision and then you've got the emerging policy areas, which are, if you like, the outcomes, but perhaps what's missing is what do you need to do in order to get them the action... It's just, I suppose, a language is a bit vague. Those words could mean almost anything, and it's making it meaningful.”

“While there is hope that the emerging priorities will foster inclusivity, the skepticism arises due to past experiences and the need for concrete actions to support individuals. People felt like it was another empty commitment until proven otherwise....because the language is not directly relating to LGBTQ specific experiences it leads to there being allowances for a lack of commitment to the diversity of all queer identities when actioning the plan”

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Insights on Theme 1: Tackle inequalities and gaps between communities

- General support for this theme but requires more details on what ‘inequalities and gaps between communities’ will be tackled and what actions will be taken.
- There is a need for a nuanced approach that recognises differences between communities as well as differences within communities.
- Careful not to pitch communities against each other and create further divisions.

“Some communities may not consider one problem as a gap between another community. This can cause tensions between communities because of different opinions.” – young person

“I'm not sure what gaps between communities mean. Do you mean that they're not integrating with each other? Do you mean the difference in how different communities access different services? Funding that's provided to different groups?”

“I mean obviously there's got to be some filtering and criteria for services, but one feels that it's just obstacles that are put in your path, you know, and sort of perhaps [in the] hope that you'll give up and not try and pursue your requests or needs.”

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Insights on theme 2: Improving understanding of residents lived experiences

- This theme was initially worded 'Improving our understanding of our community and residents' experiences' but residents fed back that it was too broad.
- The revised focus on understanding 'residents lived experiences' was welcomed.
- Clarity needed around what actions will be taken to meet this priority.

“I'm not sure about the lived experience priority.... "improve understanding of residents' individuality and diversity" is the greater priority/goal and improving the understanding of residents' lived experiences is one of the methods, goals and objectives that serves the higher goal”

“They're like they're the Council of what, like an area and then what's in the areas, communities and homes, and we make up the communities. And we live in the homes --- young person

“we should encourage people to be responsible for their own learnings and be more proactive to try to understand different people's lived experiences as well. So maybe some campaigns regarding that because it shouldn't be people's responsibilities to educate them about their experiences like you should be proactive in trying to learn yourself as well.”

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Insights on theme 3: Work in partnership to develop capability in the community

- This theme was initially worded ‘better engage residents from all communities’ but residents fed back that it was too vague and similar to theme 2.
- There was more support for the rephrased wording but need clarify what ‘develop capability in the community’ entailed.
- Several examples shared of how residents and local groups can solve issues. However, many stressed the need for the Council to actively contribute to this partnership.

“[work with local groups to develop] a partnership based on responsibilities, clearly defined duties, clearly defined framework and not you know the way we have campaigns wherever people just want to be seen on paper.. Just want to be seen to be working together.... But more like real..”

“charities has stepped in and created something where there was a need for it. The Council could then tap into those and rather than building infrastructure from scratch again, which is a huge investment... you basically piggyback on the infrastructure that's already been set up.”

“All my neighbours think that that Community Centre is just for one group of people. So if we want to think to put people together, everyone to feel like is very welcome, we need to open the spaces for everyone and create the events for everyone and let people to learn from each other”

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Insights on theme 4: Promote and celebrate the diversity of the borough

- Overwhelming support for celebrating the borough's rich cultural diversity.
- Activities need to be meaningful, go beyond mere promotion of diversity and recognise that people have different beliefs.
- A greater focus could be put on promoting common values such as respect, fairness and unity.

“I think there was some events which have been really effective at bonding and less effective at bridging. I think there needs to be funding and support for both type events. I do think it is legitimate for people from a community of interest to come together, but if you if it's going be more effective, it also then draws other people in their interest in learning about understanding”

“Celebrating diversity, I agree with. However, we should split the priority of promoting diversity as it can be used in a [bad] way by some people e.g. propaganda, could be used to oppress different communities.” – young person

“Windrush celebration is a GREAT example of positive celebration of a specific event and community – not a diversity soup”

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Insights on emerging EDI vision statements

- Residents reviewed several emerging vision statements, which included an extract from the Corporate Plan and suggestions from the EDI phase 1 engagement.
- Though an ambitious vision was welcomed, many residents felt they needed to see ‘the whole picture’ to better grasp its purpose and how it aligned with the emerging priorities.
- Residents shared mixed feelings when they considered tone and language for the vision e.g. some thought the phrase ‘fighting inequalities’ was too strong while others welcomed it.
- This highlighted the need for a unifying EDI vision that has been carefully considered and can be expressed in various ways.

“the ‘vision’ feels a bit of an over-reach. Basic services complying with Equalities Act 2010 are the priority.”

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Insights on inclusive language

Discussed collective terms for ethnicities and less engaged communities in 3 sessions, involving 36 residents. No clear preferred terms emerged which demonstrates the importance of considering different perspectives and justifying the chosen approach whilst recognising its limitations.

Collective terms	Resident quotes
<p>Ethnicity - 'ethnically diverse' seems to be the most popular option</p>	<p><i>“These terms are not desirable because of connotation. We need to have proactive/engaging words for people to feel welcome. The only word has a good element is ‘Ethnically Diverse’. But we have to find more positive/inclusive/welcoming words please”</i></p> <p><i>“Nothing stands out to me for being untoward or wrong. But I think the best people to ask for this question is that people that fit into these categories and see how they would like to be addressed. I think it would be wrong with me to say, well, I think that one it's the best.”</i></p> <p><i>“How can you have one term to cover collective ethnicities?”</i></p>
<p>Less engaged communities – no clear preferred option</p>	<p><i>“I oppose any of these terms being used because no matter how well-chosen the term is, it would become tomorrow’s cliché or hijacked phrase”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t like any of these terms. Some just sounds like they’re not listening. Some sounds like it’s Their fault.”</i></p> <p><i>“No one should be labelled as deprived, but an area may be deprived”</i></p>

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Recommendations

Refine the emerging EDI themes

- Embrace the themes but incorporate resident feedback to ensure the messages resonate with the wider public e.g. outline actions
- Explicitly demonstrate how the themes are integrated into the overarching Corporate plan priorities

Create a unifying EDI vision

- Develop a concise and easy to grasp EDI vision
- Ensure the vision is adaptable, allowing for varied articulations while maintaining a strong unifying message

Follow robust inclusive language principles

- Establish inclusive language principles to guide approach to using collective terms
- Demonstrate consideration of diverse perspectives to foster greater understanding