



Equality and Diversity Policy

Revised and updated July 2023

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1. Policy statement

- 1.1 In line with the wider Brent Council Equality Policy, Brent Start is committed to equality and diversity for all who learn, work or use our services. In conjunction with our commitment to the promotion of British values, our culture is one of awareness, understanding and respect. We value differences, for example, in ethnic background, nationality, gender, disability, mental health, sexual orientation, age, religion and belief, gender reassignment, family circumstances, economic and social background.

We want everyone who works and learns at Brent Start to achieve their full potential in an inclusive environment. Brent Start opposes all forms of discrimination, and staff and students throughout Brent Start are expected to contribute to a climate which leads to a sense of well-being, confidence and belonging.

In reviewing and developing its provision, Brent Start will pursue equality of access. Diagnostic testing, course literature and learning materials should not discriminate unfairly against people from particular groups. Support to meet specific needs (e.g. physical access) should be embedded wherever possible.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all members of Brent Start, including members of the Council linked to Brent Start, staff, students and people using our services. The policy is also binding on any of our external contractors, employers and other partners with whom we work.

3. Aims

- 3.1 This policy aims to clarify how Brent Start complies with the Equality Act 2010 and establishes clear responsibilities for all stakeholders to ensure that everyone is aware of their collective and individual duties under the Act.

4. Policy Details

- 4.1 Brent Start recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010, which identifies the following protected characteristics:
- age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race - this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
 - religion or belief - this includes lack of belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation.

The Act introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all. The Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work - in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. By understanding how their activities can impact on different people, public bodies are better placed to deliver efficient, effective and inclusive services.

4.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

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

4.3 **Definitions and general information¹**

Equality

Brent Council understands 'equality' to be about fair and equal treatment. Critically, this does not mean treating everyone the same. Instead, this requires us to focus on improving equality of outcomes to effect meaningful change. We may need to respond to people in different ways in order to meet their particular needs and to address any disadvantages faced by people who share a protected characteristic.

Diversity

Brent Council understands 'diversity' to be about recognising and valuing difference. We believe that celebrating the rich diversity of our local community helps to make everyone feel valued and respected and to break down barriers between different groups. We are committed to recruiting, retaining and rewarding a diverse, highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce that is equipped to provide an excellent service to all our local communities.

Resilient, cohesive communities

Brent Council aims to build resilient and cohesive communities. By 'resilient', we mean people and communities that are able to cope with changes in their lives and communities. By 'cohesive', we mean that people from different backgrounds will enjoy good relations and live and work comfortably together.

Protected characteristics

We use the term 'protected characteristics' to refer to the equality characteristics protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the Equality Act 2010. We recognise the important influence that the inter-relationship of these characteristics has on the identities, needs and outcomes of our residents and staff.

¹ Extract from the Brent Council Equality Policy pp.4-8

Discrimination

We use the term 'discrimination' to mean treating someone less favourably than someone else because of one of their protected characteristics. Forms of discrimination include:

- applying a policy to everyone which affects people with a certain equality characteristic disadvantageously compared to those without the characteristic – this is known as indirect discrimination
- treating someone less favourably than another person because of their association with someone with an equality characteristic
- treating someone less favourably than another person because you mistakenly think they have an equality characteristic
- positive discrimination, where someone is treated more favourably than another person because of an equality characteristic
- failing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and residents.

Age

'Age' refers to people of a particular age or age range. Brent Council is committed to tackling discrimination against younger people and older people. We recognise that negative attitudes and common stereotypes about these groups can lead to discriminatory behaviour towards them and to their ongoing social and economic disadvantage.

Brent Council will provide targeted services to meet the needs of people of particular ages, especially children and vulnerable older people. Brent will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that people of all ages receive best quality services that meet their needs. Brent will involve people of different ages in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them. By law, people cannot be treated less favourably in the workplace, or in training for work, because of their age unless there is an objective justification.

Caring responsibilities

Brent Council recognises that many of our residents and staff have caring responsibilities for children or for ill, frail or disabled family members or friends who rely on them for care, attention and assistance with their daily routine. Caring responsibilities affect men, women and children. Many of these people will not consider themselves to be carers – they will think of themselves simply as a wife, husband, son, daughter, mum, dad or friend helping a loved one. These caring responsibilities may place an emotional, physical and financial strain on an individual. As an employer, Brent Council recognises that people with caring responsibilities may need to work more flexibly and are entitled to time off for dependents to deal with unforeseen circumstances. We will accommodate these requests where operational need permits and where the matter is an emergency, we have to allow time off unpaid.

Disability

'Disability' refers to anyone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Brent recognises that many impairments are not visible.

Examples of disabilities include:

- physical impairments or illnesses that affect mobility, such as arthritis, multiple sclerosis or a stroke
- facial disfigurements
- sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing
- mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression
- learning disabilities
- developmental conditions, such as dyslexia and autism
- long-term health conditions such as HIV, cancer and diabetes.

Brent Council is committed to tackling discrimination against disabled people. We recognise that negative attitudes and common stereotypes about disabled people can lead to discriminatory behaviour towards them and to their ongoing social and economic disadvantage. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate disability discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

As a service provider, Brent Council is required to make anticipatory reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled services users have equitable access to all our services. Brent Council will provide targeted services to meet the needs of disabled residents. Brent will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that disabled people receive best quality services that meet their needs. Brent will involve disabled people in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them.

As an employer, Brent Council is required to make reasonable adjustments to remove disadvantages faced by disabled staff and job applicants when applying for, doing and keeping their jobs. Brent Council has been awarded the Two Ticks positive about disability symbol by Job Centre Plus because we are committed to employing and developing disabled people. We offer guaranteed interviews to all disabled job applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy. We make reasonable adjustments to working practices and the working environment to help disabled staff carry out their jobs effectively and stay in employment.

The following conditions are not considered to be disabilities and are not covered by this policy:

- addictions, such as alcoholism and drug dependency
- hay fever
- problems with standard vision that can be corrected by glasses or contact lenses.

Brent Council is aware of its responsibilities to individuals with addictions – both as an employer and a service provider – and is conscious of the impact of substance misuse on mental health.

Gender identity

The Equality Act 2010 protects people who undergo gender reassignment – that is, who transition from one gender to another – from discrimination. Brent Council recognises that a broader range of people may experience atypical gender identity and the ways that people express their gender roles may vary widely.

Brent Council is committed to tackling all forms of discrimination against transgender people and people who experience gender variance. We will, as far as possible, consult

with transgender people on issues which affect them to improve services and their quality of life. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate all forms of transphobia, discrimination, harassment and victimisation against transgender people. Brent Council will respect the preferred gender identity of our residents and staff.

Marriage and civil partnership

Brent Council recognises that it is unlawful to discriminate against people who are married or in a civil partnership in employment.

Pregnancy and maternity

Brent Council recognises that it is unlawful to discriminate against people who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby. We recognise that it is a woman's right to breastfeed a baby in public without interference. We will ensure that the public areas of our buildings provide a welcoming environment for women to feel comfortable to breastfeed their babies. Brent Council will not reject a job application or deny existing staff opportunities for training, transfers, promotions or other work-related benefits because of pregnancy or maternity. In recruitment, we will never ask interview questions related to pregnancy, maternity or childcare.

Race

'Race' refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Brent Council is committed to tackling any discrimination based on race. We are conscious of the racism and disadvantages faced by our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, especially new migrant groups, refugees and Gypsy and Traveller communities. We recognise that negative attitudes, common stereotypes and structural inequalities in wider society can lead to racism and to ongoing social and economic disadvantage for some ethnic groups. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate all forms of racism, harassment and victimisation and to promote good relations between all our local communities. Brent will involve people from all our local communities in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them.

As an employer, Brent aims to build a diverse workforce that represents the local community. We will use positive action measures to address the under-representation of some ethnic groups in different parts of our workforce.

Religion and belief

'Religion and belief' includes all religious and philosophical beliefs that affect an individual's life choices, including a lack of belief (that is, atheism) though there are limitations regarding the religion or belief being cogent, serious, cohesive and compatible with human dignity.

Brent Council is committed to tackling any discrimination based on religion or belief. We recognise that negative attitudes and common stereotypes about different religious groups can lead to discriminatory behaviour and to social and economic disadvantages. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with faith groups and other agencies to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to religion or belief and to promote good relations between all our local communities. Brent will involve faith groups in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them.

Brent Council supports activities organised by religious groups which are inclusive and accessible to all our communities. We do not support exclusive religious activities or activities that promote any specific religious or ideological views.

Brent Council recognises that our staff have a diverse range of religious customs and practices. Some staff may need to work more flexibly to observe their religious or cultural practices. We will accommodate these requests where operational need permits. Brent Council will not permit staff to refuse to carry out work duties because of their religious beliefs where this could affect our ability to provide a service without discrimination.

Sex

'Sex' refers to men and women. Brent Council is committed to tackling all forms of discrimination and sexism. Negative attitudes and common stereotypes based on gender are damaging to both men and women. We recognise that women are far more likely than men to experience sex discrimination which contributes to social and economic disadvantages. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to promote gender equality, to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, and to prevent all forms of violence and abuse against women and girls. As a service provider, Brent Council will provide targeted services to meet the needs of men and women where these are different or to address disadvantages faced by men or women. Brent will involve men and women in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them. When consulting with local communities, we will be conscious of the need to engage with female as well as male representatives.

As an employer, Brent Council recognises that female staff and single parents (men and women) may need to work more flexibly. We will accommodate these requests where operational need permits. We will use positive action measures to address the under-representation of women in different parts of our workforce.

Sexual orientation

'Sexual orientation' refers to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes. Brent Council recognises that an individual can also have a broader sense of their sexual identity and may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) or heterosexual/straight. We are also mindful that fear of discrimination and prejudice may prevent people from being open about their sexual orientation.

Brent Council is committed to tackling discrimination based on sexual orientation. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate all forms of homophobia, biphobia, discrimination, harassment and victimisation against LGB people. As a service provider, Brent Council recognises that the LGB community is diverse with a wide range of different needs. We will, as far as possible, consult with LGB people on issues which affect them to improve services and their quality of life. We will provide targeted services to meet the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people where these are different to each other or to heterosexual/straight people or to address disadvantages faced by LGB people.

As an employer, all our employment policies and benefits will apply equally to people in same sex and opposite sex relationships.

Health and income status

Brent Council recognises that an individual's health and income status has a significant influence on their needs and life outcomes. Although health and income status are not protected from discrimination by law, we are committed to tackling health and socio-economic inequalities in the local area.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 The Governing Board and scrutinizing members of the Council are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the strategic direction of Brent Start supports advancing equality and diversity.
- Ensuring Brent Start meets all its legislative duties, including the general and the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010 and all subsequent legislation.
- Monitoring equality and diversity reporting through the committee structure.

5.2 The Head of Service and senior management team are responsible for:

- Leading the promotion of an inclusive culture of awareness, understanding and respect.
- Implementing the Equality Act 2010, including the general and specific duties and all subsequent legislation, and of the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Ensuring the staff and students understand their responsibilities and are given appropriate support and training to enable them to carry out their duties.
- Carrying out relevant statutory duties e.g. Equality Impact Assessments.
- Ensuring the operation of Brent Start is in line with the wider Council's Equality Policy

5.3 All staff are responsible for:

- Promoting an inclusive culture of awareness, understanding and respect.
- Challenging inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour.
- Contributing to self-assessment reporting on how equality and diversity are promoted in their areas.
- Reporting any incidents of discrimination, bullying or harassment to a safeguarding Officer or their line-manager.

5.4 Teaching staff are responsible for:

- Developing schemes of work, lesson content and resources which recognise and promote inclusion.

- Fully integrating and embedding equality and diversity within curriculum planning and teaching, learning and assessment.
- Regularly reviewing the promotion of equality and diversity in individual subject areas and improving the opportunities identified in the scheme of work.

5.5 Students are expected to:

- Promote an inclusive culture of awareness, understanding and respect.
- Behave in a way which does not discriminate against, bully or harass any individual or group.
- Report any incidents of discrimination, bullying and harassment their tutor or to a Safeguarding Officer.

5.6 All stakeholders (for example, council members, contractors, visitors) are expected to:

- Behave in a way which does not discriminate against, bully or harass any individual or group.
- Behave in a way that does not contravene Brent Start's Equality and Diversity Policy or the wider council Equality Policy.

5.7 Staff and students who do not comply with this policy may be subject to the Council's and/or Brent Start's Disciplinary Policies and Procedures. External contractors, employers and other partners with whom we work are also expected to comply and non-compliance will need to withdrawal of services.

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored by the Quality Manager who will report to the Senior Management Team should any amendments be required.

6.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years. Where necessary, the review will be more frequent to ensure compliance with current legislation.

7. Related documents

- 7.1
- Brent Council Code of Conduct
 - Brent Council Complaints Policy and Procedure
 - Brent Council Data Protection Policy
 - Brent Council Equality Policy
 - Brent Start Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
 - Brent Start eSafety Policy
 - Prevent Position Statement