

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028

## Contents

Foreword .....	1
Introduction .....	2
The Profile of Brent .....	3
In the workplace .....	4
Our Progress Since 2019 .....	4
Our Commitment .....	6
Building the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy .....	7
Our Equity Objectives .....	9
Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion .....	9
Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities .....	10
Establishing an Inclusive Workforce .....	12
How We Will Monitor and Deliver .....	14
Equality Act .....	15

# Foreword

Brent's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2028 is a commitment to tackle inequalities and support individuals and families to reach their full potential. It is at the heart of our vision to move Brent forward together and ensure no one is left behind.

It is through understanding and celebrating differences and working together that we, as individuals, organisations, and communities can thrive. That is why our new Strategy is centred around equity and inclusion. We are extremely proud that Brent is one of London's most diverse boroughs. Our diversity is what makes us who we are. It brings together experiences, ideas and perspectives that are essential to making our borough the amazing place that so many people call home. This Strategy has been developed and designed through conversations with our residents, service users and staff.

We know the importance of strong, thriving communities and how living within such places can directly improve the lives of those within them through a range of positive individual health, community wellbeing and cohesion outcomes. We recognise the value of relationships in communities, informal networks of support that bind people together and the strengths and assets that exist amongst our communities. Through the engagement which underpins this Strategy, we have heard your ideas and suggestions on how to celebrate, engage and empower local people.

We are proud of our diverse workforce, yet we are also aware that diversity not only means recognising and celebrating the difference within our teams, but also channelling the power of diverse perspectives and experiences to drive innovation, creativity, and success. We are keen to go beyond representation and foster an inclusive work environment where everyone, at every level of the organisation is curious to learn and improve the council culture, and to use this knowledge to serve our communities more effectively. We want to be an employer of choice where people come to work every day with a clear sense of purpose, confident in the positive impact they are having on Brent's people, communities, and businesses. We know we will always have more to do, and will never be complacent, so this Strategy also sets out our focus and priorities on building an inclusive workforce.

We look forward to updating you on our progress as we deliver on our ambitions.

**Cllr Donnelly-Jackson**

Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture

**Kim Wright**

Chief Executive of Brent Council

# Introduction

As a Council, we place our communities, businesses, and workforce at the heart of everything we do. As one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in London, we know our diversity is our greatest asset. We value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that this brings to our community.

Brent's vibrancy is reflected through the data. It is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country as almost two-thirds of the population (65%) are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. This ethnic diversity is then reflected through the languages we hear across the borough as 34% of residents use a main language other than English, including Gujarati, Romanian, Arabic and Portuguese amongst those top spoken languages. Over half (56%) of the borough's population were born in countries outside the UK, with the highest number of residents coming from India, Romania, and Poland. Brent has one of the largest European populations in the country and the data suggests the population has grown considerably in the last 10 years, reflecting significant migration flows from Romania, Portugal, and Italy, in particular. There is also a rich religious diversity with 80% of residents having a religion compared with 57% nationally. Our largest religious group is Christian (39%), followed by those of Muslim faith (21%) and Hindu faith (16%). We appreciate that within many of these different communities, even greater diversity exists. We are keen to continue to understand, represent and serve all our residents, including more seldom heard voices across the borough.

Brent's diversity is also reflected in the make up of our workforce, where over two thirds (69%) of Brent employees are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups compared with 44% across London. The Council has an older workforce with over half the workforce aged between 41-60 (54%), while this age group comprises just 38% of the working age population. Almost two thirds (64%) of the workforce are women which is well above the proportion of women in the Brent working age population. Just over 4% of the workforce identify as LGB+ and just under 1% of employees identify as transgender. Half of the workforce are of Christian faith, 15% are Hindu and 11% are from the Muslim faith. A further 16% of the workforce indicate that they do not have a religion. Within the council, disabled people are less well represented when compared to the working age population in Brent (8% vs. 18%).

We recognise the challenges being faced across the borough and what is required to have a real recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and to tackle the unequal effect of the cost-of-living-crisis. Our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy sets out how we plan for everyone living, working, and studying in Brent to have the same opportunities and access. We want Brent Council to be the employer of choice for our residents and beyond. Addressing these challenges and developing a bold, ambitious response is critical for us to achieve these goals.

Our level of boldness is also reflected in the accompanying Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan which outlines our journey to become an anti-racist organisation. It includes and reflects how we will work with other organisations to tackle racial

injustice, this is demonstrated as we sign up to the London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement and UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter.

Over the past four years, we have made significant strides within the equity, diversity, and inclusion arena.

These programmes, events and initiatives provide us with strong foundations to move Brent from a diverse place to work and live, to one that is truly inclusive; where people of all cultures and backgrounds are represented, celebrated, and most importantly feel that they belong.

The EDI Strategy 2024-2028 provides a platform for us to work towards building a more inclusive Brent. We have spoken with our service users, our communities, and our staff to understand what makes people feel valued and what encourages people to participate fully in, and contribute to, building a strong cohesive community within Brent. We hope that this Strategy will bring power to these words as it outlines how we will take action and move Brent's EDI ambitions and priorities forward.

## The Profile of Brent

- Brent has the fifth largest borough population
- Brent population is 339,800, this is a 9% increase from 2011-21
- Population density is 7,859 people per km<sup>2</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> highest in England and Wales
- There are 118,600 households, this is an 8% increase from 2011-21
- % Change by age from 2011-21:
  - age 65+ = 21%
  - age 15-64 = 9%
  - age 0-14 = 3%
- 49% of the population are male and 51% are female
- 65% of residents are from Black, Asian & minority ethnic groups, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate in England and Wales
- 20% of households have no-one who uses English as their main language, the highest rate nationally.
- There are 8,804 LGB+ residents in Brent
- 3.2% of adults in Brent identified as LGB+
- There are 3,611 transgender residents in Brent

- 1.3% of adults in Brent identified as transgender, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate in England & Wales
- There are 41,163 people living a disability in Brent

## In the workplace

- 69% of the workforce are from Black, Asian & minority ethnic groups.
- 4% of the workforce identify as LGBT+
- 8% of the workforce have a disability
- 64% of the workforce is female and 36% of the workforce is male
- 39% of our 5% of earners are from Black, Asian & minority ethnic groups
- There is a median ethnicity pay gap of 13.9%
- There is a median disability pay gap of 2.5%
- There is a median gender pay gap of 8.8%

## Our Progress Since 2019

Our Equality Strategy 2019-2023 detailed our vision: ‘Removing inequality – building a better Brent’ which included our four priority equality objectives:

1. **Understand the barriers to equality experienced in Brent and act to remove them.**
2. **Provide accessible information and services that are tailored to peoples’ needs.**
3. **Tackle hate, harassment, and victimisation.**
4. **Lead the way in encouraging diversity to flourish in Brent.**

We have successfully been delivering these objectives through a range of initiatives and actions. Our progress has been demonstrated through some of the following achievements:

- Our **Brent Health Matters** initiative which works with communities to improve their health in the ways they want. Our outreach events provide health and care services in the community at a time and place that suits our residents. In 2023, 115 outreach events took place, being attended by over 4,000 people. Through this initiative we continue to improve our understanding and target our services on reaching those most impacted by health inequalities. For example, we responded to community concerns by

working with the Royal Marsden to address the barriers Black men told us they faced in getting screening for prostate cancer.

- **The Moving on Up** programme provided support by specifically engaging and supporting young Black men towards employment outcomes. It also aimed to raise awareness amongst employers of the issues and barriers these men may face. It supported 484 young Black men into jobs and careers over the duration of the project, which delivered employment support, working with employers and mentoring support to those within the programme.
- Our **Black Community Action Plan (BCAP)** was co-designed in 2020 with our local Black communities to tackle race inequality. This is a 10-year plan to strengthen community leadership and address priorities for change. In its first 3 years, the plan has focused on education and employment through this the BCAP has supported over 600 adults and young people in projects providing support in schools, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, digital skills, support into jobs, and mentoring.
- The Council's work on **community safety** and reducing violence has focused particularly on **reducing violence against women and girls** through our Safer Brent Partnerships. We have signed up to the Women's Night Safety Charter and continue working with staff in the night-time economy to improve women's safety across Brent.
- The Council has been recognised as a **Disability Confident Leader** and leads engagement with businesses to support them also becoming Disability Confident. Brent currently has 64 local employers registered with the Disability Confident scheme. We continue to improve accessibility to our buildings and ensuring we are inclusive through the information we disseminate.
- Brent Council has been delivering a **Supported Internships Programme** since 2020. The programme provides young neurodiverse residents (17-24 years old), the opportunity to gain vital work experience and employability skills to kickstart their careers. The programme is based at Brent Civic Centre and includes neighbouring employers. To date, 68 residents have participated, with 33 interns completing the programme, 14 interns have secured employment and a further 12 interns have gone into further education.

We will continue to evaluate the work that has been delivered through the previous Strategy and use it to push our ambitions on EDI and challenge ourselves further. The true power of Brent's diversity will be in its ability to foster a culture of inclusion where everyone feels valued and empowered, providing an environment for growth and innovation both within the community and workplace.

# Our Commitment

The overarching focus of the Strategy is 'inclusivity'. Inclusion is about how well the contributions, presence, and perspectives of different groups of people are valued and integrated into an environment.

Within our communities, this is about supporting both our established and emerging communities to feel connected and valued. We are keen to work with our communities to create opportunities for community leadership, develop greater community cohesion to encourage greater feelings of togetherness and a sense of belonging.

Within our workforce, this is about our collective mindset and organisational culture. As a Council, we are seeking to become proactive in the way we view EDI – being more curious to learn, more culturally aware and building the confidence to challenge discrimination and injustice when it is present.

Our Borough Plan sets out our ambition to be a borough where all residents can fulfil their potential and access the services they need in Brent. Our EDI Strategy supports those commitments and sets out the high standards we expect of ourselves in how we treat our workforce, and engage with and deliver services for our residents and businesses. This is underpinned by robust data collection and a commitment to monitor and evaluate impacts our proposed actions may have on access and outcomes for our communities and employees.

## **Our EDI Strategy aligns with the key priorities of the Brent Borough Plan:**

- **Prosperity and Stability in Brent**
- **A Cleaner, Greener Future**
- **Thriving Communities**
- **The Best Start in Life**
- **A Healthier Brent**

Equity, diversity, and inclusion cuts across all five and is central to everything we do as an organisation. We understand that delivering high-quality, effective, and inclusive services to residents, having a workforce that reflects our diverse population, and ensuring that residents and employees can achieve their potential and make a positive contribution to Brent and beyond will require an ambitious and bold response.

An important component of our EDI ambitions and commitments is to tackle racial injustice. To help realise this we are striving to become an anti-racist organisation and we have developed an accompanying Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan that describes the organisation's anti-racism journey. The action plan complements our focus on inclusion, particular in relation to our workforce.

# **Building the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy**

To shape our ambitions, we built on the findings from wider engagement undertaken for the Borough Plan and conducted targeted engagement to understand the issues and challenges that certain residents, service users and staff may face. We engaged with people through focus groups, workshops, and staff events to capture the voices of people who live and work in Brent. The findings from these conversations have helped to prioritise the key issues and shape our three key EDI objectives.

A copy of the consultation and engagement findings can be found on our website.

## **Objective 1: Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion**

Listening to the feedback, we heard a strong sentiment that the Council needs to be genuinely accessible for everyone. This means that Council services should be physically accessible and all communications must be inclusive and cater to different needs and preferences, ensuring everyone is engaging with the same quality of information regardless of how they access it.

To ensure needs of residents, communities and service users are being met, you told us that the Council must continue to collaborate and understand what matters most. Vital components to this include providing opportunities to celebrate Brent's rich diversity and providing communities with a voice. You suggested that community events, programmes and initiatives are important ways of making Brent a more inclusive place. Therefore, the Council should assist in creating a stronger feeling of togetherness and a more cohesive borough through such opportunities, particularly with, and for the new and emerging communities.

## **Objective 2: Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities**

To understand and address inequalities it is crucial that we collect the right data, from the right people in the right way. Engagement suggested that we continue developing local solutions that address the needs of our diverse communities, ensuring no one is left behind. You told us to work with seldom heard communities and use data to target key areas of concern. For example, providing improved support and opportunities for young people and greater resource towards providing safety for all and reducing youth violence.



### **Objective 3: Establishing an Inclusive Workforce**

Our staff provided very clear and high aspirations around having a more inclusive workplace. Staff highlighted that a more inclusive workplace will bring better understanding of employees and their backgrounds, enabling them to bring their authentic self into work and in turn, positively impacting on the communities they serve. With two-thirds of our employees living within the borough, our staff provide an invaluable insight into the needs and concerns of our communities.

Improving the diversity and representation at all levels of the organisation, including at senior levels was another key area of focus, alongside the need for the Council to have a greater understanding of our staffs' lived experience. They conveyed a keenness to review Council policies and practices across the employee lifecycle (i.e., from recruitment, progression, learning and development to leaving the organisation) to ensure they are inclusive for all.

Staff also expressed their ambitions around becoming an anti-racist organisation, these have been captured specifically within the Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan, but they also interrelate and complement this objective.

# Our Equity Objectives

Our objectives have been established by combining the Borough plan priorities and the engagement findings. The equity objectives below frame how the Council is driving greater inclusivity across Brent.

## Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion

A diverse, inclusive, and accessible borough is one where individuals from different backgrounds and identities feel welcomed, respected, and valued. We will empower our communities to involve them in decision making and enable them to shape services that anticipate and respond to their needs.

### What you Said

- Use inclusive language and improve the accessibility of all Council communications
- Improve information and communications about services, support and opportunities for residents and service users
- Greater involvement of local people in decision making
- Identify and remove barriers that may prevent certain groups from engaging with the Council
- Foster greater community cohesion by creating a borough where difference and diversity is understood, celebrated, and valued

### What we will do

- Refresh our Communication Strategy, ensuring that our communications are easy to understand and accessible, and take the different needs of our diverse communities into consideration
- Review our internal approach and use of inclusive and accessible language to ensure our corporate terminology and language is up-to-date, relevant, and appropriate
- Raise awareness to services users and across the organisation, of our accessible website, SignVideo, other specialist websites and translation and interpretation services
- Increase awareness of, and establish new forums to gain a greater understanding of the views, ideas and concerns of our residents and

communities, such as the Brent Community Review Panel, Brent Connect programmes, Care in Action and SEND Youth Forum

- Assess Council refurbishments and continually review our buildings to make sure they are accessible to all.
- Embed an engagement programme in schools giving young people a comprehensive overview of Brent's history and heritage through Libraries, Arts and Heritage
- Adapt services to provide flexible options for residents and service users to better suit their needs, such as through our Brent Hubs and Libraries
- Establish a new approach to EDI events, centred around empowering communities to mark and celebrate occasions that matter to them

## **How we will measure it**

- Usage and uptake of our accessible services such as SignVideo and translation services
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of bespoke services and methods of engagement for new and emerging communities
- Greater representation of views and impact of engagements on decision making and shaping future plans
- Monitor and evaluate impact of events co-designed with community groups
- Evaluation of events and initiatives to continually monitor and improve our offer

## **Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities**

As inequalities persist, we will focus on who, in our communities, are experiencing the worst outcomes or those with the most urgent need, to narrow existing inequalities and differences in life chances. This not only includes people with protected characteristics, but also those from other backgrounds experiencing disproportionate inequalities, such as carers, care leavers and people from lower socio economic backgrounds.

We will listen to and understand the diverse needs of communities and improve how we collect information across different services so we can understand impact. We recognise this is particularly important for our new and emerging communities. We will strive for our service delivery to be appropriate, accessible, and for our Council decisions to be properly informed by evidence. This means leaving no group or person behind but also adopting some focus on the needs that are identified through data, insights, and community voices.

## **What you Said**

- Ensure EDI issues are reflected in decision making and service delivery
- Collect and use robust data to target services on reaching those impacted the most
- Gain greater understanding of what different communities needs are
- Improve social mobility and employment opportunities for those finding it hard to enter the labour market
- Use data and feedback provided by service users and employees to inform policies and processes

## **What we will do**

- Improve our Equality Impact Assessment approach helping decision makers to have a more comprehensive understanding of impacts of policies or proposals. This includes exploring the adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty
- Continue to establish 'safe spaces' for residents fearing for their safety, across the Borough and online
- Improve our understanding of where and why health inequalities exist, in partnership with the NHS, and tailor our services appropriately for adults and children and young people
- Continue to build on our digital offer by identifying areas of digital exclusion and providing further support where required, such as connectivity, skills, and access to devices
- Provide targeted programmes which combat disadvantage using cultural and literacy initiatives through our libraries, arts, and archives service
- Address disproportionality in attainment levels for vulnerable groups, including looked after children, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children of specific ethnicities in partnership with Brent schools
- Continue providing specialised employability services through Brent Works and specialist commissioned delivery focused on assisting members of the community currently experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, including those who need support to develop their digital skills. These programmes aim to improve life opportunities and social mobility
- Address disproportionality in fixed and permanent exclusions in Brent schools in partnership with Brent headteachers
- Continue to develop and adapt our support and advice offer in Brent Hubs to help residents who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis

- Continue to design and produce services with our communities, building on the existing model we have applied to programmes such as our Community Hubs, Family Wellbeing Centres and Community Wellbeing project
- Establish an EDI monitoring dashboard and process to collate and share feedback and information that can shape our services and practices

## **How we will measure it**

- Delivering Cumulative EIAs for substantial service or policy proposals to understand potential impacts on protected groups
- Outcomes monitored by key EDI demographics, particularly gender, age, disability and ethnicity, alongside other key performance indicators
- Feedback from service users, regularly monitored by protected characteristics for differences, trends and patterns
- Monitor and act upon disproportionate outcomes in partnership with our schools and continue to roll out our 'Leading from the top' anti-racism campaign
- Monitor the number of residents supported into work, apprenticeships and training and identify and tackle barriers to employment
- Evaluate our engagement campaigns to monitor uptake in services and outreach, particularly to seldom heard, new and emerging communities

## **Establishing an Inclusive Workforce**

We want Brent to be a truly diverse and inclusive workplace. A workplace that makes everyone, regardless of who they are or what they do for Brent Council, feel equally involved in, valued, and supported at work. To ensure this, we will continually learn from the experiences of our employees and capture their voice to understand concerns and perspectives, this includes optimising the use of our staff networks and champions.

We want to ensure the Council is an environment where everyone is able to thrive.

Although we are proud of our diverse workforce, we are aware that diversity not only means recognising and celebrating the differences within our teams, but also channelling the power of diverse perspectives and experiences to drive innovation, creativity, and success. We are keen to go beyond representation and foster an inclusive work environment where everyone, at every level of the organisation is curious to learn and improve the Council culture, and to use this knowledge to serve our communities more effectively. Becoming an anti-racist organisation is also central to our vision of an inclusive workforce, therefore the ambitions outlined in the

accompanying Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan also contribute to delivering this objective.

## **What you Said**

- Provide relevant equity, diversity and inclusion training to all employees promoting greater awareness of intersectionality and improving the way in which services are delivered
- Ensure that policies and processes throughout the employee lifecycle are truly inclusive
- Work towards a workforce that is reflective of the local community at all levels of the organisation
- Improve the way we capture and analyse workforce ethnicity data to ensure ideas, initiatives and projects are evidence led and transparent
- Target initiatives and programmes supporting employees from protected backgrounds
- Ensure an environment where everyone feels safe to be themselves and continue to support the Council's Staff Networks
- Reduce the ethnicity, disability and gender pay gap

## **What we will do**

- Improve our corporate learning and development offer which contributes to embedding EDI within the organisation
- Establish a data informed journey of the employee lifecycle identifying trends relating to protected characteristics
- Establish and embed the internal Brent Council Anti-Racism Action Plan
- Support our young SEND residents with work experience within the Council
- Support care leavers with work experience and apprenticeships within the Council
- All staff to have performance objectives on EDI that are tailored to organisational, service, or individual needs
- Enable our staff networks to provide a space for open and honest dialogues about concerns and issues affecting them, educate staff about these issues and empowering staff to establish further groups and networks, where appropriate

## How we will measure it

- Capture and use feedback from employees to inform learning and development offer, such as training on neurodivergence and anti-racism
- Monitor, evaluate and address findings from reports, surveys, and action plans such as the Workforce Report, our staff survey, and the Anti-Racism Action Plan
- Monitor uptake for specific initiatives and programmes for people from protected backgrounds
- Annual analysis of recruitment and progression data that includes but is not limited to the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic applicants compared with ethnicity of successful applicants
- Monitor and evaluate information on leavers exiting the organisation, including data on protected characteristics
- Growth and expansion of the collective Staff Network offer
- Monitor the ethnicity, disability and gender pay gap on an annual basis
- Increase disclosure rate for employee's protected characteristic data
- Maintaining our Disability Employer Level 3 status

## How We Will Monitor and Deliver

We will continuously check and review the services we provide. This will be done through the learning from data and information we gather through the measures outlined in this Strategy, alongside what our residents and employees tell us. **To do this we will:**

- Establish an EDI Board which will champion and steer the organisation's priorities on all matters relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This includes effective monitoring and review of all related work streams, projects, initiatives, and action plans. The EDI Board will ensure services are held accountable for their progress in embedding best practice and will be responsible for oversight and implementation of key strategic workstreams, namely the EDI Strategy, including the internal Anti-Racism Action Plan.
- Continue to improve our Equality Impact Assessment process, to ensure that the method for completing, assessing, and monitoring the impact our policies and decisions may have on different groups of people is as robust as it can be.
- Share best practice and benchmark with our partners so that we can collaborate, learn, and improve from others where possible.

# Equality Act

Brent Council will continue to take a proactive approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion and meet the statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The duty required that all public bodies, such as the Council, consider all individuals when conducting their day-to-day work, shaping their policies, and delivering services. The Act also outlines the 'protected characteristics' – the specific aspects of identity protected from discrimination. As an organisation providing services to a diverse community, it is vital for us to consider the protected characteristics in all we do.

The nine protected characteristics are:

- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Gender reassignment**
- **Marriage and civil partnership**
- **Pregnancy and maternity**
- **Race**
- **Religion or belief**
- **Sex**
- **Sexual orientation**

The PSED requires public bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, 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.

In addition to these 'general' duties, there is also a 'specific' duty. This includes a requirement for public sector bodies to prepare and publish one or more equality objectives at least every four years.

Further information can be found on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion section of the Council's website.



If you need information in this document in a different format like large print, easy read, audio recording or braille email us at [equality@brent.gov.uk](mailto:equality@brent.gov.uk)