**Equalities Report**

**December 2024**

Reporting on our progress on **Towards a Fair Barnet (2024-2030)** – our roadmap to create a more equal Barnet, where local people can belong

**A group of people in a room

Description automatically generated** Two girls in clothing posing for a photo

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A group of women in a room with a crowd of people

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**A group of girls holding up posters

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**Foreword**

In May 2024, the council approved our [Towards a Fair Barnet Roadmap](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-performance/towards-fair-barnet-our-roadmap) to help us build a borough where everyone can lead a good, healthy, happy and long life. We developed the roadmap in partnership with our residents, based on what they told us about their experiences of discrimination and their vision for a more equal borough. This Roadmap set out our aspirations for:

*“A future in Barnet where the communities and places you belong to never unfairly impact the quality of your life and where accessible and efficient public services support the wellbeing of all residents.”*

There is still a long way to go to make our borough a more equal place. We recognise that we need to lead by example, therefore our initial key focus has been on changing our internal service delivery, embedding our new approach across different areas. This report showcases how our Roadmap is delivering tangible change across the council, in turn having an impact on residents’ experience of living in Barnet and their interactions with the council.

As a council, we are changing how we are interacting with our residents, towards a “whole person” approach that sees and supports all the factors that make up someone’s wellbeing, fulfilment and potential. Our focus has been on understanding more holistically what the resident experiences and backgrounds are – and what that means in terms of the support that we offer. From getting the right support when residents first come to us at the “front door”, to embedding “social graces” practice in our work with families, children and young people, our delivery is becoming more joined-up and person centred.

We know that working with the police and other partners we will continue to do more to ensure that all residents feel safe in our borough. This year we have seen a continued impact of incidents and world events, with people experiencing racism, Antisemitism, Islamophobia or other forms of hate crime. Despite this, 85% of adult residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. We want to build on this. In October we hosted our next step in community conversations, bringing together local community leaders for a Community Cohesion Conversation, together agreeing a way forward. Coming together is more important than ever; the front page shows some pictures from community led events that we have supported.

We could not deliver this work, without the commitment and dedication of our staff across service areas and as part of our Staff Networks. This year we have seen a greater representation of staff, that is now closer to representing our communities.

This report celebrates our successes over the last year and outlines our ambitions for equalities going forward. We know that to have a long-term impact, we cannot deliver this Roadmap in isolation, and next year, we want to further strengthen our relationships with local partners and our communities and residents. Moving towards a space where this is a Roadmap not for the council, but for the Borough of Barnet. We hope to see you with us on our journey.

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**Executive summary**

To achieve a fairer Barnet, we recognise that we need to do some things differently and ensure that best practice becomes the normal way of working in the council. Across the council, services are thinking differently about how they are delivering services – embedding the ethos of our Roadmap into policies, plans and everyday service delivery.

This report highlights some of the council’s achievements this year, including that we:

* Published Towards a Fair Barnet Roadmap as well as embedded State of the Borough reporting into our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – creating a go to page for our inequality information.
* Had a successful Ofsted inspection in June 2024, that rated Barnet’s Children’s Services as “good” overall, with an “outstanding” rating for the services and support provided to children in care. A key part of the success was our “whole person” approach.
* Have been officially awarded Borough of Sanctuary status for our efforts in welcoming those seeking a safe place to live.
* Successfully run a number of targeted projects, such as:
  + Early years projects for boys as well as Black communities with positive feedback.
  + Made significant strides in supporting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, including through video interpreting service and staff training.

It also notes some of the ways in which we have started to change how we deliver, and that will continue to be a key focus in the next year:

* We are aiming to change the way we work through reviewing how we use our Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) – ensuring that equalities are considered early in any policy development. A new version is currently being piloted, it is intersectional, and evidence based.
* We are successfully delivering a range of initiatives to reduce poverty in the borough, from targeted employment support, with BOOST helping residents find employment and to sustain it, to help accessing benefits, including through our award-winning financial calculator. Over the long-term, we will review our approaches, with the aim to identify how we can further amplify our service delivery in this area.
* 70% of adults agree that the council promotes equal opportunities for all & equal access to quality services, up on 2021/22 (67%). This is a key area of focus for the council, including embedding a “whole person” approach. We have good examples of existing practices within the council, that already operate within this ethos, some of which are highlighted within this report. There are different ways in which this can be delivered:
  + Through reviewing residents’ initial interactions with our customer services, ensuring that that residents get the right support, at the right time. This includes our popular pilot offer of in-person support for more complex problems.
  + Working more closely with residents when we design our services. For example, Adults Social Care have appointed two residents as Special Advisors to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care.
  + Through refreshing our plans for disabled residents, that are on average more likely to be dissatisfied, across indicators for our resident perception survey.
* It is positive that 85% of adults and 80% of young residents, agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area, and we want to build on this. We are working closely with our communities, including through a Community Cohesion Initiative, with plans progressing from our Community Cohesion Conversation in October.
* Introduced a migrant health needs assessment and action plan. Early results include improved vaccination uptake among migrants; we are currently expanding the successful initiative.
* Identifying ways in which we can deliver a more Sustainable Borough for all, including delivery of air quality project at Burnt Oak and ensuring fair access to “green jobs”.

Please see appendix Portfolio Oversight document for further information on our long-term ambitions, and where our work is being embedded.

**Our statutory duties, governance & working together**

**Public Sector Equality Duty & Equality Impact Assessments**

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

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

We comply with this duty by assessing the impact of our actions on different groups in the borough through carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. This includes assessing the impact on 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.

**Fairness Objectives** (Strategic Equality Objectives)

To make sure the Fair Barnet work becomes widespread in Barnet Council, our three fairness objectives build transformative guidance into our corporate themes of People, Places and Planet set out in [Our Plan for Barnet 2023-26](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-performance/our-plan-barnet-2023-2026). These fairness objectives also constitute our strategic equality objectives (SEOs) as required by legislation.

* **People:** Understand the whole person
* **Place:** Understand and tackle local causes of inequality
* **Planet:** Support a just transition to net zero

**Publication of equality information**

Publishing this annual report is also part of our duty. We have a duty to publish equality information about how we are meeting our SEOs, as well information on our employees and residents who share a protected characteristic. You can find key insight in this report, with further detail about our residents also on our Open Barnet website: [https://open.barnet.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-2024/people/inequalities](https://open.barnet.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-2024/people/inequalities/) and our reporting is published on our [website](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-performance/equality-and-diversity).

**Governance & action planning**

We have embedded these approaches across the council with service areas in progress of adopting these equalities objectives by adapting their core work to address inequalities (please see appendix Portfolio Oversight document), as well as targeted our resources towards a few specific inequalities where we think we can make greatest impact. This report highlights some of our recent work to progress activity.

**Working in partnership**

We recognise that this work cannot happen in isolation. Our roadmap was produced with a range of stakeholders including residents, community groups representing diverse communities and voluntary sector partners. They continue to be an integral part of our delivery of the roadmap, with this report showcasing some examples of how we have engaged with residents. We put communities at the heart of everything we do, reaching out and involving people who are less often heard to address inequalities better. More information on our approach can also be found in [Together](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/community/get-involved-your-community/community-participation-strategy) – our strategical vision for working together with communities. Below picture illustrates the different types of engagement that take place:A diagram of a company's company

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**An evidence informed approach**

We can only understand how projects truly impact our residents, who all have diverse needs and circumstances, if we have the evidence to prove it. To inform this work, we look at available data about our residents and survey residents about their perceptions of equality. When we identify the need to change how we deliver services, we engage with residents from different backgrounds and may also carry out qualitative and quantitative research with residents. This is all feeding into how we are changing how we operate, as seen in this report.

Last year, we reported on the State of the Borough. This report has now been embedded into our [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](https://open.barnet.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-2024/people/inequalities/), that will be regularly reviewed and developed, as we further develop our evidence base. Headline figures include:

* In 2022/23, the highest rates of relative (22.4%) and absolute (17.5%) child poverty were observed among children in Burnt Oak, whilst the lowest rates were found among children residing in Garden Suburb.
* Black or Black British children and children from other ethnic groups, were three times as likely as White or White British children, to receive free school meals in 2022.
* There is a notable gender inequality in terms of school readiness. In 2022/23 at the end of Reception, 76.5% of females achieved a good level of development, compared to 64.6% of males. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic stalled the progress in the development of 4–5-year-old children across all ethnic groups. It also exacerbated inequality. In 2021, only 43% of Black or Black British boys achieved the expected development standard, compared to 61.5% of White or White British boys.
* From 2020 to 2022, females in Barnet, at the age of 15, were projected to spend more years of their remaining life providing unpaid care (7.2 years) compared to males (5.4 years).
* In 2022, Black residents were, on average, twice as likely as White or White British residents to utilise adult social care services. Meanwhile, Asian, or Asian British, Mixed, and other ethnic groups were equally likely to use these services.
* Female residents born in 2020/21, residing in the least deprived 20% of areas in Barnet, were projected to live 4.6 years longer than their counterparts in the most deprived 20% of areas. In contrast, the life expectancy gap for male residents stood at 5.4 years.

Barnet Residents’ Perception Surveys track council reputation, service and local area perceptions. There are two versions of the survey – one for adults (2,000 respondents) and one for young residents aged between 11 and 18 (500 respondents). The surveys offer a representative sample of our population and is run by an independent research organisation. The most recent surveys were conducted over the Autumn/Winter 2023/24 and will be reported to Cabinet in February 2024.

Satisfaction among residents is generally high for most themes, but there are demographic differences. Both disabled adult residents and disabled young residents continue to have by far the lowest level of satisfaction across the board. We can also see lower satisfaction among residents living in areas of deprivation, as well as among older residents (55-65, 75+) and homeowners.

Geographically, the wards with lower satisfaction are clustered towards the west of the borough, with a particular corridor running down from Edgwarebury, through Brunt Oak and Colindale, to Hendon and Finchley Church End, but with pockets elsewhere, in particular Barnet Vale.

The survey asks two questions, that we track to understand perceptions of inequality in Barnet.

* 85% of adults respective 80% of young residents, agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. This is line with the London adults benchmark average (83%) and the national adult average (84%), though slightly down on 2021/22 (88% for both adult and young residents). It is positive that Barnet retained a high proportion of residents who feel strong cohesion in the community, given the rise in community tension and hate crime following the escalation of conflict in Israel and Gaza. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the results between ethnic or religious groups.
* 70% of adults agree that the council promotes equal opportunities for all & equal access to quality services, up on 2021/22 (67%). This is a key area of focus for the council, as reflected by this report.

**Piloting a new approach for Equality Impact Assessments**

Evidence is crucial for Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIAs), our method to identify any disproportionate impacts of a council project on different people groups (e.g. people with a disability) and encourage mitigating actions of these disproportionate actions to be put in place. We are piloting a new version of the EqIA that will allow officers and Members to have a more realistic idea of the challenges that residents face based on their complex identities – and identify the support they need. This new EqIA will contribute to the culture change we hope to implement across the council that prioritises making things fairer when implementing any new project or strategy:

* **We will go beyond our legal obligations.** This means that while we recognise that protected characteristics are important influences on resident outcomes, we know that there are also other important factors that affect people’s lives too (e.g. socioeconomic deprivation).
* **We will consider the impacts on people through an intersectional lens.** People experience challenges because of their complex and multiple identities, and we want officers to identify these impacts using the EqIA.
* **We will challenge and highlight equalities impacts throughout the whole lifespan of a project.**
* **We will support officers with guidance, examples, and best practice** through a redeveloped Equalities Hub on the intranet.

**Reducing Poverty**

Reducing Poverty is a key aim of [Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/Barnet%20Corporate%20Plan%202023-26.pdf). Barnet is often perceived to be a wealthy, suburban London borough. However, this masks pockets of deprivation across the borough, and, in actuality, [26% of Barnet’s population is in poverty](https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/boroughs/barnet-poverty-and-inequality-indicators/?tab=poverty-and-living-standards) (defined as less than 60% of median household income after housing costs) – in line with the London average (26%). Many residents struggle to make ends meet and the cost-of-living crisis saw it affecting more residents than ever before. Our immediate responses to the crisis was outlined in a cabinet [approved](https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s80334/Cabinet%20Report%20-%20Reducing%20Poverty.pdf) Poverty Reduction strategic action plan in October 2023. Benefit and income maximisation is at the core of our efforts, including through signposting residents to our award-winning [Financial Benefit Calculator](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.barnet.gov.uk%2Fnews%2Fresidents-urged-complete-financial-calculator-through-new-campaign&data=05%7C02%7CLinea.Heinonen%40Barnet.gov.uk%7C053b2706e3264683b38308dcde36af38%7C1ba468b914144675be4f53c478ad47bb%7C0%7C0%7C638629573696193368%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=j7qOlXOKTXZ%2B%2BMhRI3%2BdAjJWztDRNW74ZlZUbY8aUp0%3D&reserved=0), and our [welfare support funds](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-financial-advice/cost-living-support/funds-help-cost-living), as well as targeted efforts to enable residents to find employment.

While the impact of inflation has decreased, there continues to be significant challenges for households in the borough with the latest data indicating that Barnet families are still impacted by the cost-of-living crisis:

* We have seen an increase in homelessness approaches with [high housing costs a key driver of poverty](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/londons-poverty-rate-is-shockingly-and-stubbornly-high#:~:text=High%20housing%20and%20childcare%20costs,national%20average%20of%2039%25).). Families in poverty in London spend 51% of their income on housing costs (compared to the national average of 39%). For those living in private rentals in London, this rises to 64% of a family’s income. [In Barnet](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/aboutcensus/censusproducts/multivariatedata), renters are more than twice as likely to be deprived in all four dimensions captured by the 2021 census: education, employment, health and housing than all-Barnet residents. Historically, Barnet Homes has delivered effective mitigations to prevent homelessness - prevention outcomes increased year-on-year until 22/23 – where dysfunction in the private rented market reduced our ability to prevent homelessness. Key focus of Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 is to ensure sufficient supply, as well as further develop our prevention approach. This year, the Homelessness Forum was re-launched, bringing together partners, and reviewing pathways into homelessness. Teams have been re-configured to speed up residents’ access to the right services, with new early help and health focused pilots underway. In the first quarter of 2024/25 successful preventions increased and were ahead of the target for the quarter.
* [18.9% of Barnet borough residents' jobs are low paid](https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/boroughs/barnet-poverty-and-inequality-indicators/?tab=work-worklessness-and-benefits), higher than the London average of 16.4%. [Following a number of years at a stable rate](https://open.barnet.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-2024/people/employment/), in the last couple of quarters, in-work recipients of universal credit has also started to rise to a high of 16,068 in Q1 2024/25 (48% of households that are in receipt). We are striving for good employment opportunities in the Borough, for example, 48 Barnet businesses are now committed to the London living wage, up 17% in the past year from 41.
* [The employment rate in Barnet has reduced over the past four years](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157261/report.aspx), from a high after the pandemic in 2021/22 of 78% to 67% in the latest quarter against a higher stable London (75%) and national (76%) average. This includes, in Barnet, a substantial downturn in the female employment rate in the last quarter, to 62%, against a male employment rate of 73%. To address this, Barnet’s employment service, BOOST, offers targeted support to those furthest from the job market. The service is targeted to engage 1,040 residentsof which 386 will enter employmentand309 to sustain work for at least 3 months from April 2024 to March 2025 – by end of September, they had already engaged with 468 residents, with 179 job starts and 117 in sustained employment. This includes targeted engagement with a number of groups with additional barriers. In addition, BELS deliver programmes for vulnerable young people including NEETs, Care Leavers and SEN – from April to September 2024, they have already engaged with 194 participants, with 37 starting new jobs and 75 enrolling into training or education. In Partnership with the Department for Work & Pensions, Shaw Trust is also delivering a tailored programme to those out of work and claiming unemployment benefits, delivering 103 job starts between April and September 2024.
* In line with a reduced employment rate, the [number of households receiving universal credit has steadily risen](https://open.barnet.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-2024/people/employment/) over the last few years to a recent high of 32,639 (22%) in Q1 2024/25.
* Analysis by our internal Insight & Intelligence Hub, shows that nearly 5,000 people are estimated to be eligible for, but not yet claiming, Pension Credit in Barnet. In response to the national withdrawal of winter fuel payments to pensioners that are not on pension credits, Barnet Council will be running our third Pension Credit Campaign over the winter with letters scheduled to land on the doormats of pensioner households in December 2024.
* Throughout the UK, children face a higher poverty rate than working age adults and pensioners. Positively, [Barnet has seen a reduction in the proportion of children in poverty](https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty-2024/), declining from a high of 31% in 2018/19 to a new low of 25% in 2021/22 and 2022/23. This is in line with similar reductions among children’s services statistical neighbour boroughs. Families are impacted by high living costs, including housing, but also lack of affordable childcare. [Joseph Rowntree report](https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk#_-cost-of-living-crisis-continues-to-bite) that families whose childcare responsibilities limit their ability to work are particularly affected, as well as larger families – that are more disproportionally impacted by a number of benefit policies, including the two-child limit and the benefit cap. There is no single set of responses to tackling child poverty and its contributing factors. An ongoing holistic approach has been adopted to improve young people’s lives and their opportunities to succeed. Our previous [life chances/child poverty strategy](https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s63618/Life%20Chances%20Strategy%20Final%202020-2024_1.0.pdf) is now incorporated into [Children and Young People’s Plan](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/023575%20Phase2%20CYP%20plan%202024%20landscape%20v14%20FINAL2.pdf) 2023-27 as a key pillar in seeking to drive better outcomes with resilience at its heart. Services and partners work together in order to improve wellbeing for children living in poverty in Barnet.

A report on the progress of the plan is underway, reviewing the actions to date and their impact over the last year. Over the long-term, we will also look to identify cross cutting focus areas where the council can really make a difference. Linked to this, Barnet’s economic development framework 2024-29 is in development, due to Cabinet later in the spring of 2025. It will set out what more the council can do use it levers to boost local businesses and voluntary sector, growing our local economy and creating employment opportunities.

**Towards a Fair Barnet - Embedding our Fairness Objectives**

Across the council, services are thinking differently about how they are delivering services – embedding the ethos of our objectives into policies, plans and everyday service delivery. This report highlights some of our achievements this year – please see appendix for further information on our long-term ambitions.

**People: Understand the whole person**

Our Fair Barnet Roadmap sets out how we will view people as their whole selves and not by isolated individual equalities characteristics. Services are making plans to move from relating to residents just by the nature of their service request to thinking about the whole person in the round of their experiences. We have good examples of existing practices within the council, that already operate within this ethos, some of which are highlighted within this report. However, we know that there is more that we can do to ensure that residents experiences are systematically focused on the “whole person” and we are currently delivering a project to further embed intersectional approaches across the council, including by highlighting good practice and raising awareness.

**Case example: Supporting Meryl**

By taking a person-centred approach to services we can provide personalised support for residents to access the help they need, at the right time. One example is Meryl, who relocated to Barnet through a mutual exchange. She is a single mother to a teenage son, moving because her son was severely bullied at their previous location, and was experiencing emotional distress. Meryl suffers from chronic pain, which makes it difficult for her to focus. She is currently unemployed and relies on Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP). As a result of this, she arrived at the council visibly distressed and agitated due to a lack of support.

The lengthy, and complicated application processes for support further diminished her resilience. To address this, a multi-faceted support system that addressed housing, health, and educational needs was introduced, including regular follow-ups. Meryl successfully accessed support and was provided a safe space to share her concerns. Meryl is not an isolated case but highlights the importance of clear communication/processes and accessible services for those facing multiple challenges.

**Our “Front Door”**

Meryl’s experience (above) highlights how key residents’ first interactions are with the council. We aim to connect residents with holistic support from when they first contact us, addressing challenges before they escalate into crises. Streamlined, central points of contact allow residents to access key services more efficiently, eliminating the need to navigate multiple departments or platforms.

* A Customer Experience Platform will be implemented by end of 2024. It will centralise interactions across multiple channels, by unifying customer profiles and leveraging data. On-going monitoring will take place to refine the system, which is aiming to improve operational efficiency, reduce wait times, and offer better issue resolution.
* A preventative, place-based service, is being gradually introduced to help residents with complex, cross-cutting, and multiple needs navigate and connect with Barnet Council, government, and voluntary community sector support tailored to their needs. Phase one is set to be implemented by early 2025. Since the prototype was launched in December 2023, we’ve had over 6,500 visits from residents seeking support at Burnt Oak Library, Colindale Offices, and Chipping Barnet Library.
* We continue to focus on making our website as accessible as possible. Previously reported projects, such as the implementation of Recite Me and Sign Solutions, are in place to further improve the accessibility of our website. This year, we have:
  + Continued to review website content, ensuring all information, is written clearly, simply, and consistently, catering to users with different literacy levels. This effort has led to a 10% increase in customer satisfaction on the website.

The ASK Barnet chat function for residents went live on July 23, 2024. It allows residents to access chat services for Revenue & Benefits, Street Scene, School Admissions, and Pest Control. Feedback from residents is being closely monitored, and currently, the chatbot is engaging with around 15 users per day. The containment rate (queries handled by the chatbot) is just over 50%. We expect these numbers to improve as awareness of ASK Barnet grows, attracting more users and generating more enquiries.

**Adult social care is working closely with local residents to shape services**

We continue to work collaboratively with residents across adult social care to shape services and practice, ensuring the voice of residents and carers are key in shaping adult social care services:

* We have appointed two residents as Special Advisors to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care. Special Advisors attend and participate in Committee meetings and raise concerns, highlight good practice and help identify areas for improvement. For example, Barnet residents from the People’s Voice Group and Involvement Board reported concerns about Autism and ADHD referral and diagnostic pathways. This was escalated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care through resident representatives. The Scrutiny Committee have instructed a Task and Finish group on this topic and are working collaboratively with the residents to gather further insight and to develop these areas of focus. Residents report positively on the approach, sharing they feel that their concerns are being actioned.
* Involving residents in commissioning and procurement of services and in recruitment and training of social care staff. For example, working with residents to coproduce a training resource for practitioners who carry out carers assessment in the form of a video where carers share their lived experience of the carer’s assessment process and impact of the intervention on them and their loved ones. Carers joined our all staff briefing for adult social care to promote the training.
* Introduced People’s Voice drop ins for residents with lived experience and their carers to give feedback about care and support. The drop ins have been developed with residents and are co-hosted with resident representatives from the Involvement Board, alongside voluntary sector partners such as Inclusion Barnet. Resident representatives have agreed the themed around areas of lived experience and for topics such as wellbeing and keeping active to be included.

General resident responses to the adult social care approach have been positive; hosting sessions and hearing from other residents has allowed them to feel more empowered. Feedback from sessions is being used to shape adult social care initiatives going forward.

**Reframing adult safeguarding project**

Starting in 2022/23, the project has successfully promoted understanding and knowledge about safeguarding amongst Barnet’s diverse communities. It was funded through the Public Health prevention fund, with CB Plus, one the voluntary sector partners on the Barnet Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB), leading on this piece of work. CB Plus focussed on conversations with residents and community groups working with protected and/or at-risk users to deliver a community safeguarding information for people and organisations on how to effectively safeguard adults. Through the engagement activity and survey, we have learnt that:

* The term safeguarding did not always have an equivalent in other languages or cultures
* Differing attitudes as to whether people feel comfortable in reporting safeguarding issues
* Barnet Mencap group identified that they wanted more information about preventing financial abuse
* Suggestion on develop a codeword which could be used in local shops which could be used to alert people that an individual needed help

57 participants took part in the focus groups undertaken by CB Plus, plus 30 individuals/organisations filled in an online survey. Furthermore, it was promoted at local events such as for example Black History month, with a further 500+ organisations reached via outreach events. An [online video](https://combar-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/liv_cleverley_cbplus_org_uk/EdAFYPppIqRIqVXCEfE_MRkBbZvcUrlYREXlQBrUWp4_VQ?referrer=Outlook.Web&referrerScenario=email-linkwithembed&xsdata=MDV8MDJ8Sm95Y2UuTWJld2VAQmFybmV0Lmdvdi51a3w2Y2ExOWUwOWZkZGQ0OWM4MjM1NzA4ZGQwMzNmZDUyOXwxYmE0NjhiOTE0MTQ0Njc1YmU0ZjUzYzQ3OGFkNDdiYnwwfDB8NjM4NjcwMjk0ODc5MTIzNzY5fFVua25vd258VFdGcGJHWnNiM2Q4ZXlKRmJYQjBlVTFoY0draU9uUnlkV1VzSWxZaU9pSXdMakF1TURBd01DSXNJbEFpT2lKWGFXNHpNaUlzSWtGT0lqb2lUV0ZwYkNJc0lsZFVJam95ZlE9PXwwfHx8&sdata=ZjVYTXZWMHV6UDE3UFo5dWxLUHg5bERoaFpkYTB6dGFnLzkvd1ZSazVpbz0%3d) has been produced for use in future events, and the full report can be accessed here: [BSAB Community Engagement Reframing Safeguarding](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.barnet.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F15971&data=05%7C02%7CJoyce.Mbewe%40Barnet.gov.uk%7C6ca19e09fddd49c8235708dd033fd529%7C1ba468b914144675be4f53c478ad47bb%7C0%7C0%7C638670294879134041%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=nfiCbsy2Aus1ZrMew420CRKBgi8SEiOrtIwjjldiAaw%3D&reserved=0).

**How we are addressing dissatisfaction among disabled residents**

In 2021/22 our Adult’s Resident Perception Survey identified that disabled residents are generally less satisfied that the general population. As previously reported, in 2022-23, we commissioned an ethnographic study to understand more about their lived experiences of adults and children with a disability residing within the borough. This study found that we needed to improve aspects surrounding how we understand the identity of residents with a disability, the importance of making information more accessible, and ensuring we facilitate the engagement of individuals with a disability in community life.

Recognising that we needed to have a deeper understanding of the experiences of children and young people with a disability residing within the borough, we commissioned an ethnographic study to ensure their voice was fully heard. The study found that:

* Diverse and inclusive spaces allow disabled children to be their authentic selves.
* The importance of creating environments where trusted and peer relationships can flourish.
* Taking a whole-person approach during transitional stages is crucial to disabled children and young people having the right support at the right time.
* Connected parents lead to connected children.
* Young people want to be included in decision making and creating solutions

The recommendations from the ethnographic studies, have contributed to a range of actions, and we have successfully delivered for example a deaf and hard of hearing project. Further delivery in this space is currently being reviewed for a refreshed Disability Action Plan. The need to deliver change for our disabled residents is further strengthen by 2023-24 Adult’s Resident Perception Survey repeating the picture; finding that disabled residents are more likely to be less satisfied in 28/33 indicators featured in the survey, than the general population.

**Case study: Delivered deaf and hard of hearing project**

Funded by Greater London Authority, an engagement project was commenced that aimed to improve access and information for deaf and hard-of-hearing residents. Discussion groups were held to co-develop solutions, focusing on varied communication needs. As a result, the council’s website now offers easier navigation tools, including the InterpretersLive service, providing over 70 minutes of monthly video interpreting for British Sign Language (BSL). The Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Support page has also been translated into BSL. In response to resident feedback, deaf awareness training, delivered by the Jewish Deaf Association has been provided to staff, with plans to introduce an e-learning module. Resident feedback has been positive. Neighbourly Lab reported on the [significant strides achieved](https://www.neighbourlylab.com/post/bexley-barnet-brent-some-of-the-councils-leading-the-way-in-community-engagement).

**How we have embedded a “whole person” approach to our work with children and young people**

Children and Families Service have a focused “whole person” approach across their service area, embedding it systematically. This played part in our successful Ofsted inspection in June 2024, that rated Barnet’s Children’s Services as ‘good’ overall, with an ‘outstanding’ rating for the services and support provided to children in care. The report noted that children’s care needs are well explored and assessed and inform care planning effectively. One example is how the “*adoption service is ambitious for children and has successfully sought to create a wider choice of adoptive homes through a more inclusive recruitment approach. Children benefit from the availability of adopters from a range of backgrounds*”.

Underpinning this is the Barnet Family Services Practice Framework and Guide, particularly Practice Principle Two – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – emphasises the importance of considering the multiple layers of an individual’s identity when engaging with or finding solutions for families. A key tool for this is the Social Graces, which is a systematic social work tool that represents aspects of difference, into work done within the service area. This tool provides prompts for practitioners to consider these factors and reflect on their own approach to working with families. This tool ensures that responses are tailored to the specific needs of families seeking support.

A yellow square with white text

Description automatically generatedThe Social GRACES mnemonic gives us a way to think about, talk about and explore these aspects, and have conversations that can sometimes seem complex or complicated. Using the Social Graces can be a powerful and helpful intervention to explore similarities and differences between a practitioner and family. This means that each different area of social difference is not more important or exclusive but in a reflexive relationship to each other.

Training on social graces and intersectionality is provided to both internal staff and external partners. Intersectionality is a key learning frequently highlighted as an area requiring ongoing training by the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership, where in response to serious incidents, in-depth learning reviews are conducted.

Robust practice audits are conducted across all Children’s Service areas to assess whether an intersectional approach is being considered when working with families. Feedback from families is gathered to track progress and analyse key performance metrics. This allows the service area to continue to review the success it is having.

A testament to the success of the intersectional approach taken by the service areas was illustrated by Ofsted who in their latest inspection found that “*Children with complex needs are met by experienced social workers who understand their unique needs and disabilities exceptionally well*.” While also finding that there is a strong self-evaluation approach from leaders and managers which “*Helps to ensure that most children’s needs are met consistently*”. This model of self-evaluation creates an environment of continuous improvement. The inspection also highlighted the work done for children with autism who receive help from the expertise in the specialist autism team, whose members have smaller caseloads, enabling these social workers to be available in times of crisis. We are proud of the *experiences and progress of children in care* findings from our latest Ofsted inspection and will continue working hard to ensure our outstanding rating is maintained.

**How we are bridging the education gap**

Barnet is well known for the excellent quality of its schools and the diversity of its educational offer. Our Education Strategy includes a mission focused on accelerating the progress of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils in order to diminish the difference between them and their peers. Barnet’s Disadvantaged pupils perform better than national Disadvantaged pupils, but there are still some gaps in achievement between those pupils who are Disadvantaged and those who are not. [Education Standards Report](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/education_standards_in_barnet_2022-23_1.pdf) reporting on results in 2023 show that:

* SEND pupils achieve excellent results compared to SEND pupils nationally at all Key Stages. This is due to our continued focus on their achievements – aiming to bridge the gap between their achievement and pupils with no SEN.
* There were also improvements in the achievement of Children in Need (CiN) and those on a Child Protection Plan (CP) in 2023. Attendance of Children in Need was comparatively very low in 2023 but plans are in place to address this with increase support and challenge. Achievement in Maths for CiN and CP children at KS2 was also comparatively lower than other subjects and is therefore a priority.
* Black pupils perform relatively less well compared to other ethnic groups and, from KS2 onwards, better than black pupils nationally. For example, at KS4 Black pupils in Barnet ranked 29th for attainment (still in the top 20%) and ranked 35th for Progress 8. Comparatively, Asian, Mixed and White pupils ranked above 10th in all categories, other than Asian pupils’ Progress 8 scores, which ranked 20th.

To address these gaps, every year the BELS School Improvement Team and the Schools and Settings Standards Partnership Board (which includes headteacher representatives from both primary and secondary schools) evaluates the achievement data and other information available in order to create priorities within the Schools Improvement Strategy. These priorities are shared with schools and feed into the training, new projects and the focus of meetings with schools over the year.

Strong early years of education is crucial. To address relative underperformance for some groups we have recently run projects on ‘Our Brilliant Boys’ and ‘Using Representation in Texts and Resources’ with a focus on our Black communities. The structure of the projects is broadly similar in having an inspiring launch day which includes training, raising awareness and expertise, followed by a six-month programme of support and training, including school visits to trouble shoot any obstacles to children’s engagement and learning.

This longitudinal approach builds a community of support for the teaching teams and enables us to facilitate them to try new things and explore new resources. The outcomes of these projects have been impressive and whilst the data is largely soft data collected from observations and samples of children’s work, what we do see is improved expertise and awareness from teachers and increasing confidence and engagement from the children. We are proud that schools then go on to re-run the teaching sequences on subsequent years and even restock resources so that other cohorts can be offered the same opportunities.

**Places: Understand and tackle local causes of inequality**

Where you live can unfairly impact your life chances in Barnet. Our Fair Barnet approach embeds a focus on the structural root causes that are driving inequality in our neighbourhoods and communities.

**Fostering community cohesion**

A key priority area for us is to foster community cohesion by encouraging mutual understanding between all communities. We know that perceptions of safety in the borough vary, with people experiencing racism, antisemitism, islamophobia or other forms of hate crime. This is heightened by incidents and world events, such as the present-day conflict in Middle East. Barnet have recorded tumultuous rises in racist and religious Hate Crime since October 7th 2023. Met Police data shows a 47.3% increase in reported hate crime in the year to July 2024 (1,153 incidents compared to 818 in the preceding 12-month period). Faith-based hate crime, especially in the wake of events in the Middle East last October, more than doubled during the same period, but all forms of hate crime saw an increase. Despite these figures, we know that hate crime is still one of the most under-reported forms of crime. Despite this, our ‘Adult Resident Perception Survey (2023/24)’ show that large majority of residents (85%) agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is above the London (83%) average.

We are reviewing our approach to hate crime, thinking about it more holistically in the context of community cohesion. An internal working group has been established to advance this work, exploring ways to raise greater awareness of hate crime and ease the reporting process. We are joining-up our activity on community cohesion, from community safety work to community engagement. This includes initiatives such as community listening circles, our borough of sanctuary network and our events celebrating diversity in the borough.

We are working with community leaders to identify themes that unite their communities with this work. This October, during Hate Crime Awareness Week, we held our first Community Cohesion Conversation. This event brough together over 20 community leaders to discuss initiatives to create a safe and strong community that respects the borough’s rich diversity. We gained valuable input from the community on our long-term approach to community cohesion and started a series of discussions to keep residents engaged with this work.

**Challenging beliefs and attitudes that underline hate crime**

Hate Crime is a key theme within our Community Safety Strategy, from actions taken to combat Hate Crime, to improving reporting and supporting victims, we are working with our partners to ensure that residents feel safe and a part of a cohesive community. This year, key achievements include:

* Delivery of initiatives to educate and tackle specific categories of hate crime. Under the prevention fund, the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) team partnered with Solace and Barnet Mencap to deliver a project called Engage; Empower; Move On. The project included survivor support programmes, community outreach to engage with groups who are often hidden from support, as well as awareness workshops with staff from the council, voluntary organisations as well as residents. Feedback from the initial 5 awareness workshops (reaching 32 participants) has been positive, with participants reporting increased understanding of hate crime and VAGW. Further workshops are planned over the next couple of months.
* Continued delivery of initiatives to support victims of crime. This includes the support provided through Barnet’s Victim Care Hub and the Restorative Barnet Project. The Restorative Barnet project has reported better support for Victims from Police and CJS. Reporting from June 2024 showed that training was delivered to schools and internal/external partners, with feedback received as 100% positive.
* Continued work with Barnet Mencap to deliver the Hate Crime Project, recruiting residents as hate crime champions and community spaces as Hate Crime Reporting Centres. In the Autumn, we collaborated with Barnet Mencap and Met Police, to deliver a renewed [Hate Crime Awareness Communications campaign](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/news/hate-has-no-place-barnet-borough-marks-hate-crime-awareness-week#:~:text=Barnet%20will%20mark%20Hate%20Crime%20Awareness%20Week%20(12%20to%2019,has%20no%20place%20in%20Barnet%27.), which was developed to serve as a part of a longer-term Community Cohesion campaign. The campaign aimed to raise awareness on reporting hate crimes, as well as embed a ‘hearts and minds’ message to strengthen the view that Barnet’s communities get along well together. Promotion was run throughout Hate Crime Awareness Week (12th to 19th October), supporting a programme of awareness events. This included a series of Hate Crime Awareness stalls across the borough and Hate Crime reporting Webinar.

**Became a Borough of Sanctuary**

In May 2024, Barnet was officially awarded Borough of Sanctuary status for its efforts in welcoming those seeking a safe place to live. The Borough of Sanctuary title is awarded by the charity City of Sanctuary UK to organisations and areas that go above and beyond to welcome those looking for a safe haven. In recent years, Barnet has been working on various areas of help for refugees and asylum seekers, including commissioning New Citizens’ Gateway and Persian Advice Bureau to provide invaluable support. At the time of receiving this award, Barnet hosted more than 1,700 Ukrainian refugees through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, supported many individuals and families through the Afghan Resettlement Scheme, and welcomed Hong Kongers through the Hong Kong BN(O) scheme. In addition, it has supported more than 1,000 children into school places and allocated extra funding to schools accommodating asylum-seeking children.

To develop this work, the Barnet Borough of Sanctuary Network has been relaunched. This includes a meeting with key community partners to help deliver on Barnet’s vision of becoming a place of welcome to all those who are seeking sanctuary. These partnerships have created avenues for sanctuary seekers to receive tailored support that recognises and respects their individual backgrounds, cultures, and needs. The group is supporting the development and delivery of the Borough of Sanctuary Action Plan, which priorities inclusivity, community spirit, empowerment and active listening. Key achievements include:

* Council Sanctuary team has hired Ukrainian guests who arrived in Barnet under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, providing direct support to fellow Ukrainians. This has been instrumental in ensuring refugees feel understood and supported by individuals who share similar experiences.
* Borough of Sanctuary events and art and cultural exhibitions, where sanctuary seekers have had the opportunity to showcase their talents, particularly in performing arts, visual arts, and other creative expressions. These events have had a transformative impact on both the participants and the wider community – opening doors for cultural exchange and fostering a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. Sanctuary seekers regain confidence and pride in their identities, while also connecting with new social networks.

**Introduced Community Listening programme**

This initiative, which is a key part of Together, our Community Participation & Engagement Strategy, is currently in its pilot phase. It consists of a series of roundtable discussions involving members of specific communities, Cabinet members and Senior Council officers. It focuses on deepening relationships with and amplifying the voices of minority groups on topics proposed by the communities themselves. In total, thus far, 41 community members from over 30 different organisations across the borough have been involved. The circles are a part of the council’s dialogue and co-production commitment with our communities; progress on points raised is fed back to participants periodically and inform programme review as well as the future direction of this work. Examples from initial work includes:

* Dialogue with Muslim community on how to further counter Islamophobia and promote awareness of Muslim values: The Council recognised the [United Nations Combating Islamophobia day on 15 March](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/news/barnet-council-cabinet-members-issue-joint-statement-ahead-un-international-day-combat), supported the [Big Iftar interfaith](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mdx.ac.uk%2Fnews%2F2024%2F3%2Fbig-iftar-interfaith-celebration%2F&data=05%7C02%7CLinea.Heinonen%40Barnet.gov.uk%7C88a28125b7164b10426408dcd1919bc7%7C1ba468b914144675be4f53c478ad47bb%7C0%7C0%7C638615670533597464%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Ih7Qq60Ufyws8gLVssNcDlugSfGLJiHQcFdtXhCAodQ%3D&reserved=0) event at Middlesex University and hosted an internal Eid lunch in April. In November, Barnet Council Leader issued a statement in support of [Islamophobia Awareness Month](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/news/barnet-council-leaders-statement-support-islamophobia-awareness-month#:~:text=This%20Islamophobia%20Awareness%20Month%2C%20I,too%20often%20scapegoated%20and%20persecuted.).
* Working together with the Black communities to mark the Anniversary of the Empire Windrush's arrival in Britain (22nd June), from raising the Windrush flag at the Council’s Colindale Office, to partnering with the Barnet African Caribbean Association and Middlesex University to host a vibrant event at the Barnet Multiculture Centre. It showcased the Barnet’s Windrush Stories project which continues to document stories through various mediums.
* Ensuring that communities are kept up to date with relevant housing developments. For example, Orthodox Jewish community representatives are now updated on Brent Cross development, which is next to one of the greatest densities of Jewish residents in the country.

**Celebrating our communities**

In its second full year, the council’s Community Events programme delivered even more opportunities for residents to celebrate together. The programme has enabled small voluntary organisations and community groups to celebrate faith and cultural festivals that were important to them and in a way that they felt was most appropriate to the communities they represent.

Most of the events were open to all, increasing the awareness in the community and fostering better community relations. In addition, the council led events have moved from council organised to being co-produced with the relevant communities. Not only did these events celebrate diverse Barnet communities but also enabled closer and stronger working relationship with the communities that might have been previously less engaged or lesser heard from.

53 events were delivered this calendar year across the borough. Whilst the majority of these were led by the community, some were led by the council such as those marking major faith and cultural occasions: Black History Month, Diwali, South Asian Heritage Month, Ramadan, International Womens’ Day and Pride. The Community events grant scheme enabled, so far in 2024, over 45 community groups to hold their own events. Community organised events included events celebrating heritage such as Romanian Culture Day, days of significance such as Windrush Day or provided an opportunity for otherwise underserved communities such as residents with disabilities or additional needs to come together. Almost 60 % of the organisations we funded, were led and representing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Co-creation, true representation and empowering diverse communities of Barnet has been key consideration for all community and council led events alike. Going forward our aspiration is to learn from the work, and how it can form part of our culture strategy and participation and engagement programmes.

**Tackling health inequalities**

The term health inequalities can include differences between people’s health and differences between factors that affect their health – including access to health and social care, health-related behaviours (for example, whether someone smokes), and the wider determinants of health (for example, their job, or how connected they are to other people). We see health inequalities between different socio-economic groups, across different parts of the borough and between groups with different protected characteristics such as sex, ethnicity or disability, as well as by under-served groups, for example some migrant communities. Some people experience multiple factors that affect their health, widening health inequalities.

This is further described in [our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA](https://open.barnet.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-2024/people/inequalities/)) as well as in the Director of Public Health’s report [Mind the Health Gap in Barnet](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-key-documents/annual-director-public-health-report). Published in 2023, it describes health inequalities in Barnet, for example Figure 3 shows different average outcomes for people living in the most and least deprived parts of the borough. Many of our strategies and work programmes aim to tackle health inequalities and improve health in Barnet, with below highlighting some our initiatives this year.

A diagram of a child's life cycle

Description automatically generated

**Introduced a migrant health needs assessment and action plan**

One example of how we are delivering our Borough of Sanctuary status, as well as addressing health inequalities, is our [migrant health needs assessment](https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s75859/Barnet%20Migrant%20Health%20Needs%20Assessment%20-%20September%202022%20Updated%20Copy%20-%2028.12.22.pdf) and action plan. Developed by Public Health, the assessment and action plan, has identified key areas for immediate focus - these include addressing access to healthcare, in particular primary care, mental health, dental care, increasing the uptake of immunisations for under 5s, and supporting food and nutrition. Working together with agencies commissioned to care for children, Children’s Early Help and hotels that are housing asylum seekers, we can already see an impact. This includes a modest increase in uptake of immunisations following work at one of the hotels. This has encouraged us to repeat the methodology at the other hotels, expanding the work to incorporate wider support for under 5s. Work in this area has attracted funding from North Central London Integrated Care Board (NCL ICB) to support its development and the team are working with colleagues across NCL to ensure collegiate approaches.

**Community Vaccine Champions**

The Barnet Community Vaccine Champions (CVC) programme was initially designed to promote COVID-19 vaccinations and reduce inequalities in vaccine uptake in the borough. It has been providing targeted support to areas and communities facing the greatest challenge in relation to vaccine uptake, including young people (12 to 30-year-olds), wards with high deprivation, Eastern European, and Black Caribbean/African/other black communities, ultra-Orthodox Jewish, Muslim, and Evangelical Christian groups, asylum seekers and people experiencing homelessness.

We recruited Health Ambassadors and developed local communications, engagement activities and practical solutions to increase vaccine uptake. During the work, we recognised that an effective way for Health Ambassadors to initiate conversations with different communities was through discussing other health and wellbeing topics that they were interested in. To develop this, the programme merged with broader initiatives addressing health inequalities. Our Health Ambassadors expanded their work to include topics such as cardiovascular disease prevention, childhood and school aged immunisations, influenza vaccinations, mental health, living with COVID-19, and the cost of living. Within the project, 11 VCS organisations received funding to engage communities with low vaccination uptake, appointing 7 Health Ambassadors to build trust and connectivity with communities. The training empowered participants with new skills, leading to further opportunities. Immunisation rates have also increased through the duration of the project. Between January 2022 and August 2024, there has been an improvement of +4% points of the proportion of 1-year olds getting the right vaccinations, +8% points at 2 years old and +5% points at five years old. However, a number of other initiatives to improve vaccination were in place during this time, so we cannot fully distinguish the impact of this project from the other work being undertaken. Six organisations and two ambassadors continue to focus on health inequalities, and the model has been adapted for a new Cancer Screening Health Ambassador programme.

**Healthy Hearts Peer Support Project**

The Barnet Healthy Hearts Peer Support project raises awareness of cardiovascular disease in Barnet’s African, Caribbean and South Asian communities. Through peer support, the project aims to reduce cardiovascular health inequalities in the borough. It is delivered in community settings and offers individuals the chance to meet and connect with other people from their community, who share some of the same cardiovascular risks. The Peer Support Team offer brief interventions, and also run longer workshops and four weekly in-person support sessions that include information from a range of professionals about how to manage blood pressure and overall heart health. The project team ensure that the support is culturally appropriate and that the resources are accessible. Participants also discuss other factors that affect their health, and the team signpost to local resources when helpful.

In Year 2 of the project, from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, 1,191 residents took part in Healthy Heart events, and there were 173 attendances at workshops and multi-session courses. From surveys after the courses, residents reported reduced salt intake, more positive eating habits, increased activity and speaking to their family about what they learnt.

**Community Food Growing Leaders Project**

This project aims to give community members training on how to establish and run a community food growing project. Through consultation with food growers in Barnet, the council’s Greenspaces and Public Health teams identified, that a lack of community food growing leaders was inhibiting the growth of community food growing projects. New growing spaces were found in locations across Barnet, and the project has been promoted widely in areas of higher deprivation and places deficient in greenspace, attracting a diverse group of participants. A broad range of risk factors are being addressed; the project provides space for regular social interaction, reducing loneliness and social isolation, and physical activity outdoors which is accessible to people of all ages and physical abilities.

**Adapting our plans – Street Scene**

An example of how a service area is adapting its plans, is Street Scene’s work to embed a Fair Barnet approach. Our popular [Community Skip Service](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/community-skip-service) was launched in November 2022; since then, there have been 18,065 individual visits made to the skip locations across the borough, by residents, and almost one in seven of all clicks generated by the Barnet First eNewsletter in 2024, have been for community skip information. Last year, Street Scene identified that Community Skips are an opportunity to meet up with neighbours and break social isolation, especially for our older residents. Street Scene ran a marketing campaign through a social isolation lens and produced a [video](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D55qlCe__anc&data=05%7C02%7CLinea.Heinonen%40Barnet.gov.uk%7C1a24d246a6ca4ca9a72208dcd33176f4%7C1ba468b914144675be4f53c478ad47bb%7C0%7C0%7C638617456626683874%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=s68WUVeV6nHyv7gg4Yt1hc5whum7wEyQVGhnry5%2Ff70%3D&reserved=0) that was popular on social media. Street Scene is now considering how it can apply this approach to other areas, in particular plans to introduce a separate food waste collection service in 2026.

The service has also recently concluded a trial providing enhanced recycling service offer to flats, many of which do not currently benefit from the full range of services that low rise households receive (mainly due to space constraints in many locations). Initial findings of the pilot indicate positive take up and will be used to inform the future roll out of a separate food waste collection service and recycling function in the future (in line with the requirements of The Environment Act).

**Planet: Support a just transition to net zero**

In May 2022 Barnet Council declared a climate and biodiversity emergency, recognising that urgent action is needed to tackle climate change and make Barnet a sustainable place for all who live, work and study here. In being a sustainable borough, we will ensure our actions don't negatively impact future generations – and that we achieve our sustainable goals in a way that improves resident livelihoods and leaves no one behind.

**Improving air quality in Burnt Oak**

Research by the [Environmental Protection Agency](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-environment/state-of-the-environment-health-people-and-the-environment) highlights the impact of air pollution on health in the UK, on life expectancy, as well the relationship between spending time in the natural environment and positive impacts on physical and mental health. It also shows that residents living in more deprived areas tend to be negatively affected. In Barnet, Burnt Oak has the lowest life expectancy in the borough and there is lack of greening on the high street or sustainable access to green spaces. Air pollution levels such as nitrogen dioxide, exceed World Health Organisation levels and national air quality objectives. To address these problems, the council has received nearly £600,000 from the Mayor of London Air Quality Fund, to create a Burnt Oak Low Emission Neighbourhood that looks to improve air quality in the area. This project will increase greening and active travel infrastructure, install air quality monitors, and work with local schools to reduce air pollution and create a more welcoming high street. The programme began in July 2024 and will be completed by March 2027.

**Climate impacts and inequalities**

A map of a city

Description automatically generatedWe recognise the [unequal impacts of climate change on society](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/659ff6a93308d200131fbe78/HECC-report-2023-overview.pdf) and as a council, we need to build resilience and prepare people and places to the impacts of the changing climate, as we experience warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers and more frequent and intense weather extremes. The council is developing a climate adaptation framework and action plan to ensure that these impacts do not disproportionately affect those who are already vulnerable. We are taking an evidence-led approach to this and have already started working with Bloomberg Associates to develop a set of climate risk maps, which account for social vulnerabilities as well as physical climate risk. The map below highlights areas of overall climate risk based on the analysis. These maps will inform the development of a climate adaptation and resilience workstream, focusing on alleviating the worst impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable.

**Warm and healthy homes**

Compounded by the recent increase in cost of living, rising energy costs, up 50% since 2022, have led to a higher proportion of Barnet residents in fuel poverty, exacerbating other inequalities typically experienced. Responding to this challenge will require collaborative and innovative solutions across how we support and engage around healthy homes and the wider energy system to create healthy places to live, which are less expensive to heat:

* We are designing our webpages to be accessible for all, so that simple advice can be accessed, grants can be signposted and best practice shared.
* We will work with our partner Barnet Homes to build on successful delivery of grant funded energy efficiency schemes from the Local Authority Delivery Scheme and Sustainable Warmth Competition. Over 100 properties have received energy efficiency measures to date with residents benefitting from healthier and warmer homes, as well as energy and financial savings. We are now delivering the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund programme to 136 council homes by April 2025, as well as supporting Barnet residents to access the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2, the Energy Company Obligation and Warm Homes schemes.
* We are thinking holistically about Barnet’s future energy system, through the development of a Local Area Energy Plan, which will identify the most suitable energy efficiency measures for different communities across the borough, including the role of heat networks and solar panels.
* We have partnered with [**MapMortar**](https://www.mapmortar.io/#:~:text=MapMortar%20is%20a%20virtual%20modelling%20and%20simulation%20platform) to develop a digital tool to help break down barriers to information about homes and retrofit. This tool will be launched in November and provide tailored energy advice to support Barnet residents, and provide options to improve the warmth and comfort of homes of all makeups and budgets to identify and help plan the most effective and accessible energy efficiency works.
* As part of the ongoing development of the council’s BarNET Zero communications, we are working with behaviour change specialists to help develop an engagement campaign aimed at supporting residents in fuel poverty; this campaign will go live in January 2025.

**Developing skills for a just transition**

In partnership with Places for London, Ballymore and the Council, the [Skills Centre](https://theskillscentre.co.uk/locations/edgware), a new Construction Training Centre in Edgware has opened. This state-of-the-art facility is designed to build opportunities and transform lives by equipping local residents with essential skills in green construction, insulation, and dry lining, directly addressing the needs of the construction industry for warmer, energy efficient homes. The centre opened in June 2024, with an official launch in September 2024, and has already been making an impact to the local community in Edgware and across Barnet. Since May 2024, the centre has delivered a "Women into Construction" programme with 15 participants, 6 of which have already secured employment, and Hands-on work experience during the centre’s refurbishment for Simon, a care leaver from Barnet Council, and 6 electrical students from Barnet and Southgate College.

**Our Workforce**

Barnet is proud of its diverse and vibrant workforce. Over the last three 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:

* We have an inclusive culture, based on an empathic understanding of people’s life situations and lived experiences.
* Our workforce is representative of the communities we serve at all levels.
* 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.
* All staff are given the opportunity to grow and develop.
* Barriers to equality are better understood and eliminated
* Equalities, diversity and inclusion are promoted at all levels of the Council, internally and externally.

We have seen a greater representation of staff, that is now closer to representing our communities. In 2020, 2.8% of our workforce identified as disabled. As of April 2024, we have increased representation to 8.3%. 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 41.1%, which is closer to our local population of 42.3%. However, in order to achieve inclusion, we need to see representation at all levels of the organisation. Last 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, this year we have seen a rise and continue to work to achieve greater diversity within our senior leadership team that identify as Black.

This year we launched the Culture Learning Log, an initiative to support staff to report incidents of microaggressions across the business, the log has supported us to target training to better enable staff to support each other and residents and aims to increase the cultural competency levels of staff across the organisation.

We report annually on our gender and ethnicity pay gap. At present, 59.4% 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 an 8.4% 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 406 non-managerial roles with 377 (92.9%) of those roles filled by men.

The last year has also seen us launch policy to improve the lived experience of our staff including a menopause policy that was made in collaboration with union and staff network colleagues alongside HR.

**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 of seven Staff Networks (SN). Each Staff Network is focused on supporting, celebrating, and raising awareness, as well as the lived experience, of staff who identify as having one or more protected characteristic. Many of our staff are also residents. The last year seeing a rise in antisemitism and islamophobia, has led to the creation of our Jewish Staff Network, as well as a monthly safe space for Muslim staff, to meet and share their lived experiences.

The BEA leads have organised additional events that staff have had the opportunity to engage in including, but not limited to:

* South Asian Heritage month
* Pride Picnic
* Gypsie, Roma and Traveler community awareness webinar
* Disability History month panel talk
* Black History month, Reclaiming narratives
* Menopause awareness webinar and regular lean in circles
* Hannukah
* Islamophobia and Antisemitism awareness webinars
* Diwali

The aim of the events is to educate, celebration with a purpose, we want to encourage staff to challenge themselves, embrace cultures and lifestyles outside of their own and reflect on the lived experiences of their colleagues and our diverse and vibrant borough. Each event has a call to action to encourage staff to continue to build their understanding and awareness and in turn improve the design and delivery of services for residents.