



Putting the Community First:

Barnet's Equalities Policy

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1. Introduction

This equalities policy sets out Barnet Council's vision and commitment to ensure equality of access and opportunities for everyone in Barnet. In serving our community, we aim to improve the quality of life of all residents and service users.

As a diverse community, we value and celebrate the richness of culture, backgrounds and traditions we share. Barnet Council accepts that discrimination is a major barrier to a fair and just society. We are guided by the reality that there are people who are prevented from taking part fully in the life of our community, for example, in the areas of employment, housing and education. The reasons for their unfair treatment and exclusion may be related to their age, disability, ethnic background and skin colour, faith, gender, health, language, social and economic background, or being lesbian or gay. Barnet Council recognises that discrimination affects people in complex ways. We are committed to challenging all forms of inequalities.

2. Our Vision

Barnet Council is committed to improving the quality of life and wider participation for all in the economic, educational, cultural, social and community life of the borough. We also aim to have a workforce that reflects the diversity of talent, experiences and skills of our communities.

Our equalities policy is guided by the following principles:

- All residents, service users, service providers, employees and partners in the community have a responsibility to promote equalities and challenge discrimination and stereotyping
- All residents and service users are able to participate fully in the life of the community and celebrate its diversity
- Every resident and service user has equal access to high quality services that meet their needs. We recognise that there are some people who may need support in receiving this entitlement
- Every resident, service user and employee is entitled to a safe environment free from discrimination and harassment
- Every employee is entitled to training and development and fair opportunities to promotion
- All residents, service users, employees and our partners in the community are encouraged to make their contribution to improving our services

3. Our Equalities Commitments

Promoting equalities is about putting principles into practice. These are our commitments to all service users and staff.

Barnet Serving our Diverse Communities

The council is a major provider of services to residents and businesses. We have a key role to provide relevant and accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse communities. We aim to ensure that high standards of quality and equality are always maintained. We aim to improve access for all.

Every service user:

- has the right to receive appropriate, accessible services that are free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- has the right to be treated with respect and provided with accurate and up to date information about the Council's services
- should feel enabled to access Council services and not feel excluded because of their age, disability, ethnic background and skin colour, faith, gender, health, language, social and economic background, or because they are lesbian or gay
- has the right to be consulted on the way the Council plans and delivers its services

- has our assurance that service contracts will incorporate equalities principles and that performance against these will be monitored
- has the right to give and receive feedback or raise complaints about services through clear and easy to use complaints procedures
- should feel able to contribute to the Council's decision-making process. This includes all user representative groups and community groups, and those who historically have been under-represented

Barnet as an Equal Opportunities Employer

Barnet Council is a major employer in the borough and therefore we have a key role to play in tackling inequalities and discrimination. We aim to ensure equalities underpin all aspects of employment policy and practice. We recognise that promoting equalities also makes good business sense. We intend to become an 'employer of choice'.

We aim to:

- be an equal opportunities employer committed to a policy of equal access to employment opportunities, training and development, at all levels of the organisation
- recruit and retain a workforce that reflects the expertise and diversity of our community and ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are in place to attract the best applicants to Barnet
- support staff in increasing their understanding of equalities issues through regular staff development programmes

- build on our positive action policies to redress inequalities and discriminatory practice
- create a safe working environment where any form of discrimination and harassment is dealt with quickly, appropriately and effectively, and where staff feel supported in challenging discrimination and harassment
- promote and further develop work-life balance policies to ensure that we maximise employment opportunities for all

4. Our Cycle Of Improvement

We are proud of our success but will also ensure that we review what we do and make improvements. We believe that promoting equalities is a continuous process. To put our vision and commitments into practice we will:

- develop action plans and set targets
- establish and implement monitoring systems
- evaluate and measure our progress
- publish our performance against our equalities targets
- share our improvements and achievements with all staff and our partners in the community
- identify areas for improvement

5. Our Responsibilities

Within the Council, all elected representatives and staff have a part to play in challenging discrimination and in implementing this policy:

Councillors are responsible for promoting the equalities agenda and ensuring that adequate resources are made available.

The Chief Executive and Directors are responsible for the overall management and strategic direction of the equalities agenda.

Heads of Service and Management Teams are responsible for ensuring the implementation of the policy in their service areas, the inclusion of equalities targets in their performance management plans and developing criteria for success.

Human Resources Service has the responsibility to lead on equalities issues in employment throughout the council.

Unions and Staff Representative Groups have a responsibility for representing the views and concerns of staff on equalities issues and in supporting the continuous improvement of equalities policy and practice.

All staff have a responsibility for promoting and delivering equalities in the workplace and in serving the community.

6. Relevant Legislation

Barnet Council will implement its equalities policy in accordance with the current legislation governing local authorities and the associated codes of practice. We set out below the main legislation in the area of equalities:

- Equal Pay Act 1970 and Amendment 1983
 - Sex Discrimination Act 1975
 - Race Relations Act 1976
 - Mental Health Act 1983
 - Children Act 1989
 - NHS and Community Care Act 1990
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
 - Crime and Disorder Act 1998
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Asylum and Immigration Act 1999
 - Local Government Act 1999
 - Care Standards Act 2000
 - Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
 - Special Educational Needs and Disability Rights in Education Act 2001
- EU Anti-Discriminatory Measures (1997 Treaty of Amsterdam)

◆ Equality (Employment) Regulations 2003 onwards

♦ Equality Act 2006

A summary of the legislation is available from the Equalities Team

This document is also available on tape and in Braille on request. For a copy please ring 020 8359 7263

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Copies of this Policy can be downloaded from: www.barnet.gov.uk

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