

Equalities Policy

January 2014



Foreword by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

In a time of unprecedented financial challenge it is important to ensure that the decisions the council takes are fair and that, as an organisation, we are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

Barnet's revised Equalities Policy will help us to deliver our commitment to equal opportunities for all as the council commissions and delivers services during challenging times.

Barnet is large, growing and diverse and we are proud that Barnet is a place where people get along well together. The focus of the council is to foster growth in the local economy and we want everyone to benefit from that growth. But we know that some residents will continue to need our support, which we will provide, whilst helping others maintain their independence.

The council will be transparent and keep equalities at the heart of decision making as we continue to make tough financial decisions. We will monitor and report our progress, making sure we are aware of any disproportionate impact on particular groups.

We want to keep Barnet as a great place for people to live, work and study. I look forward to working with our local partners and residents from across the borough to ensure that everyone can achieve their potential and benefit from all that Barnet has to offer.

What does Barnet Council want to achieve?

At a time of change and continuing financial austerity, the council has made a commitment to treat citizens equally with understanding and respect; provide equal opportunities and quality services in line with Best Value principles. This commitment is at the core of the council's constitution.

We will take a borough wide approach to equalities and we recognise that one sector alone cannot reduce inequality, grow the economy or encourage community action. We will work with all our partners in the private, public and community sector and the rich diversity of Barnet's communities to:

- keep Barnet as a good place to live work and study where every Barnet citizen has the opportunity to live, work and study, in a safe environment free from harassment and discrimination
- build on local community strengths and assets so that citizens can support each other to take control of their own lives, optimise their independence, and make a difference in their communities and to local services
- support communities to get on well together and build understanding about what really matters to citizens
- promote active engagement with the rich diversity of Barnet's communities, people who use services, residents and employees
- seek out the voices of people who are not always heard and those who need extra help to access our services
- place a clear emphasis on creating the right environment for fair economic growth across the borough which supports the

development of diverse markets. We want to ensure that workforces and suppliers can maximise the benefits of jobs and growth for local people and communities

- use evidence to support the delivery of needs led, appropriate and accessible services which reflect the diversity of need at different stages in people's lives
- meet our legal, organisational and personal responsibilities to treat people fairly, promote equalities, address inequality, challenge discrimination, and make reasonable adjustments when we identify any physical or attitudinal barriers which limit equal opportunities.

Who is included in the Barnet Equalities Policy?

Barnet Council's Equalities Policy is relevant to all Barnet Citizens - everyone who lives, works, studies and uses services in the borough. The Policy outlines key ways of working for Barnet Council staff and the organisations who deliver services in partnership with, and on behalf of, the council.

How will we do it?

Barnet is a 'Commissioning Council', providing services through a mixed economy of private, public and community organisations to secure the best value for the taxpayer.

We will:

- work to reflect and integrate equalities into everything we and our partners do. We will embed equalities into the decisions the council and partners make and into business and financial planning processes
- work with local partners including public, private, voluntary and community sectors to gather information and data to understand and act on citizen's needs and expectations. Use data to identify

trends and barriers and take action to make reasonable adjustments

- assess the impact on equality as the council and our partners develop and implement specific strategies, policies and programmes
- be open and transparent, publish information regarding our progress against our equality objectives and ensure partners can be held to account for mutually agreed outcomes
- make consultation and engagement with the rich diversity of Barnet communities a cornerstone of developing new actions and approaches
- enable everyone to participate in the life of the community and celebrate its diversity
- develop a 'Communities Together' network, with the council facilitating different local groups to share information and build an understanding about what really matters to Barnet's communities, and how we can get on well together.

What do we expect from our partners?

The council expects all its partners to:

- commit to the aims and principles and ways of working set out in this policy document and reflect these in the way they do business in Barnet
- reflect legal requirements for equality including the General Public Sector Equality Duty where it applies, by promoting equality, tackling discrimination and paying due regard to equalities in decision making
- collect, analyse and share equalities data to support the achievement of this policy and report progress, for example, as part of Barnet Council's Strategic Equalities Objective

- know about and respond to the diverse nature of Barnet as part of their standard business model
- support people to access services and reflect Barnet's diversity in their service provision by communicating with their customers, making their services accessible and personalising their offer to meet individual needs without a service premium.

What do we expect from our citizens?

We want to support everyone in Barnet to take control of their own lives, communities and local services. We will foster a culture of personal responsibility where citizens and communities encouraged to promote equalities and community cohesion, maximise their independence, support each other and challenge discrimination.

How will we know that we are making a difference?

We will focus on the outcomes of our equality aims as set out in this policy.

- we will publish our Strategic Equalities Objective and measure our performance against it. These measures will reflect the things that people tell us they value and we will monitor the impact of the economic downturn on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged
- in collaboration with our partners we will measure our progress, publish the results and take action to address physical and attitudinal barriers to people having equal

life chances. For example, we will monitor the reporting of hate crimes

- we will publish an annual report of our progress against our Strategic Equalities Objective
- we will share best practice and achievements with our partners so that we can collaborate, learn from others and improve.

The Leader of the Council, who is the responsible Elected Member for Equalities, the Lead Member for Community Cohesion and the council's Strategic Director for Communities, will review progress against our aims.

This Policy will be reviewed with the Corporate Plan in 2015 and in the meantime we will continue to work with our partners, communities and residents to implement the Action Plan that goes with this policy.

Our Strategic Equalities Objective and progress against the performance measures we use to measure it will be kept online and up to date here www.barnet.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/224/equality_and_diversity.

More information can be found on the Equalities pages on our website, including:

- our Equalities Policy Action Plan which will be updated annually
- our Strategic Equalities Objective and the measures we use to monitor it
- information on our progress and our key achievements
- our staff equalities policy
- links to our partners' equalities policies.

For more information:
email: equalities@barnet.gov.uk