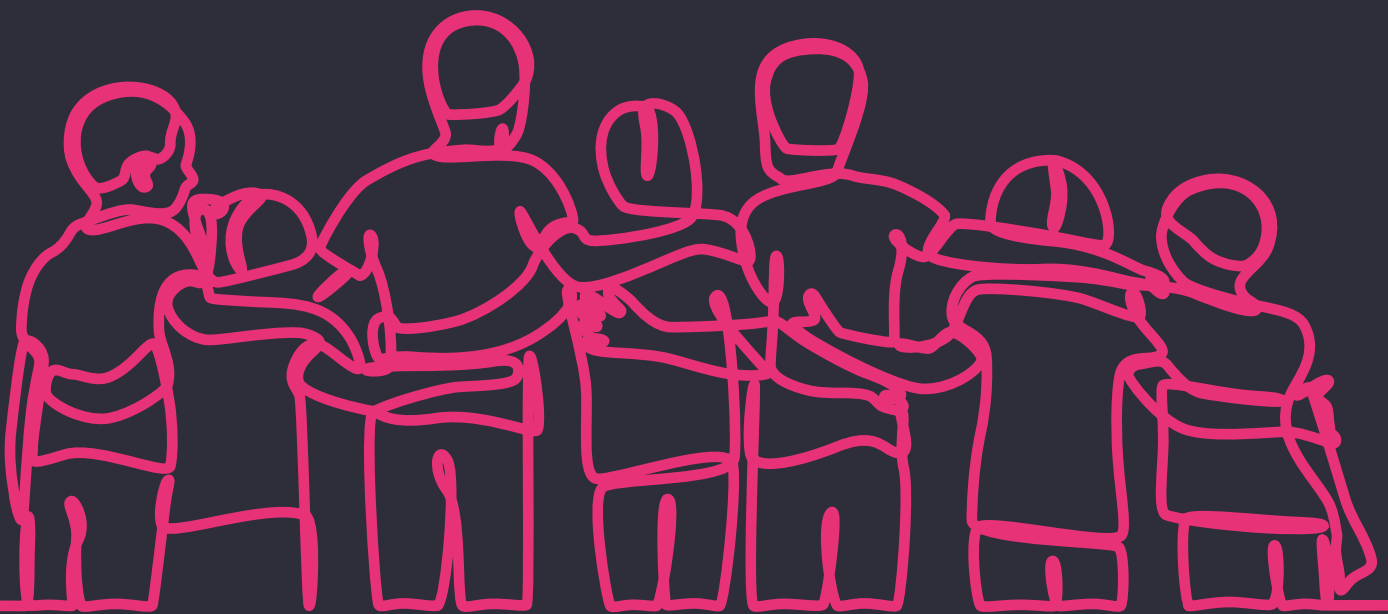


Building a fairer future together

Barking & Dagenham **Equality, Diversity and** **Inclusion Strategy** **2025 to 2029**





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Foreword



Councillor Saima Ashraf

Deputy Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Member for
Community Leadership and
Engagement



Councillor Sade Bright

Cabinet Member for
Employment,
Skills and Aspiration

Barking and Dagenham is rich with a variety of cultures, backgrounds, and lived experiences, and it is this diversity that makes our borough a truly special place. However, while the council has made great strides in promoting fairness and inclusion, we must continue to ensure that every resident, regardless of their identity or circumstances, has access to opportunities and tailored support they need to thrive. It is essential to also ensure that everyone who works for the Council or receives public services from us is valued for who they are, and treated with respect, dignity and fairness.

We know we have further to go, that inequality, exclusion and inequity remain, many exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic, austerity and rising cost of living. The Council is transforming its approach to prevention and early intervention to respond to the rising need and reduced resources, to better support residents to live happy and healthy lives whatever their background. The Council is working closely with partners to develop neighbourhood teams which are underpinned by five principles: being community led; creating connected communities; improving access; collaborating around residents; and acting before crisis. Addressing inequalities and embedding inclusive values runs through this and all work we do.

Through our Anti-Racism Charter, we set out clear principles to tackle racism and promote equity. We are proud to be recognised as an Investors in People (IIP) accredited employer and a Disability Confident organisation, reflecting our dedication to creating a workplace and borough where diversity is celebrated, and everyone feels safe, supported, and empowered to thrive.



As we progress with “Our B&D – Building Communities and Driving Opportunities”, our refreshed place-based vision for the borough, which underpins joint work across the Council and its partners to drive improvement and tackle inequality, our work will be understood and translated through an overlapping framework of People, Place and Partnerships, providing lenses through which to consider key challenges and develop solutions in line with those principles.

As Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Leadership & Engagement and Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills & Aspiration, we are proud to introduce Building a Fairer Future Together (our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29). It states our commitment to breaking down barriers, tackling discrimination, improving outcomes, fostering cohesion, and creating a borough where everyone feels valued, heard, and supported. Inequality exists in housing, employment, health, education, and other key areas. Addressing these inequalities is not just an obligation but a fundamental priority for our council. We want to create and foster the conditions and opportunities for people to thrive here, and for residents to benefit from the positive changes and growth taking place in the borough.

Our long-term ambition for the borough is to be a place that people are proud of and want to live, work, study and stay. Our vision is to ensure that Barking and Dagenham is a place where people feel safe, supported and able to fully be themselves; a place where people can be proud of who they are, as well as where they live.

Saima Ashraf

ASBright



The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is a key piece of UK legislation that protects people from unfair treatment based on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

As a public sector organisation, the council has additional responsibilities, called the Public Sector Equality Duty.

When carrying out our day-to-day functions, including developing policy, decision-making and delivering services, the Equality Act 2010 says it is essential to have due regard or think about the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

The Public Sector Equality Duty also requires us to publish Equality Objectives every four years. This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy includes our Equality Objectives for 2025-2029, and ways in which we will work to ensure that the council is meeting our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

We recognise that we need to go beyond basic legal duties – we are committed to putting equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do, by listening to residents, learning from those with lived experience, and using data more effectively. These principles guide our work, helping us create fairer policies, services, and outcomes for everyone in our community.

In 2023, we were proud to sign the Unison Anti-Racism Charter, demonstrating our commitment to tackling racism in the workplace. By signing the charter, we have pledged to take real action against racism, including having a clear race equality policy, offering anti-racism training for staff, promoting diversity in our workforce, and supporting the wellbeing of employees affected by racism.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we will also undertake the LGA Equality Framework self-assessment and report our position through the first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy annual progress report.



Resident feedback and community consultation

As part of our commitment to ensuring the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy is shaped by the voices of our community, we carried out a series of face-to-face targeted consultations with local residents and community groups. These conversations provided valuable insights into the lived experiences, priorities, and aspirations of people from diverse backgrounds across Barking and Dagenham.

To ensure broad and inclusive participation, we also launched the Building a Fairer Future Together survey. This online consultation was promoted across all council social media platforms and published on One Borough Voice. The survey was shared with residents, VCFSEs (Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises), and key stakeholders.

We held focus groups with our women's, men's and youth networks, our Adult Social LGBTQ+ Network, representatives from faith groups, and disability charities. The groups represented a wide range of lived experiences across age, race, gender, religion, and disability. This diversity helped ensure that our approach to equality and inclusion was shaped by real voices from across the borough. The response provided valuable perspectives on community priorities and experiences.

Key themes from the engagement included:

- A desire for safe, permanent community hubs and increased visibility in council communications.
- Emphasis on the need for in-person services and digital inclusion tailored to older adults.
- Calls for accessible services that consider language needs, mobility, and mental health.
- Feedback highlighting challenges in accessing services online and the need for alternative, user-friendly options.
- Interest in shared, central spaces for community groups and stronger partnerships with faith-based and charitable organisations.
- Recognition of the need for more mental health support, particularly for vulnerable groups.

The feedback gathered has directly informed the development of our priorities and will continue to shape how we deliver inclusive services and support across the borough.



Understanding our borough

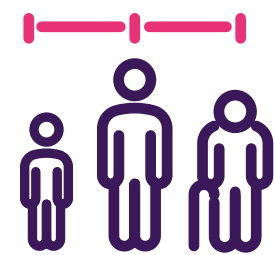
Barking and Dagenham is a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse community.

Understanding our borough means recognising the rich mix of people who live here and the different experiences they bring. Looking at the profile of our borough against the protected characteristics helps us to see where inequalities may exist and where extra support may be needed.

The Council also recognises socio-economic disadvantage, while not a protected characteristic, significantly impacts life chances. We know that certain communities are more likely to be impacted by socio-economic disadvantage and therefore our work around the Anti-Poverty Strategy is increasingly important in a borough like ours.

Evidence shows that one size does not fit all. To reach equality of outcomes we need to provide services better tailored to needs and experiences. We can only achieve this through a deep understanding of the communities we serve.

Our Residents



Age

We have the **highest** proportion of under 16s (25.3%) in England and Wales.



Disability

9% of our residents are disabled and are limited a lot by their disability – one of the highest figures in London.

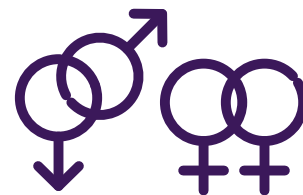


Sex

There are slightly more women than men in LBBD (**50.9%**).



8.6% of our residents are aged 65 and over.



Sexual Orientation

2.28% of our residents identify themselves as from a LGBTQ+ background.



Gender Reassignment

Our Borough has the **highest percentage** of people in England and Wales who identify as a trans woman (0.25%) and the third highest percentage of those who identify as a trans man (0.24%).¹



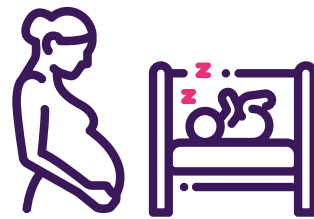
Race

69.1% of our residents are from Black Asian Multi-Ethnic background.²



Religion or belief

The **biggest faith groups** in the borough are Christianity (45%), Islam (24%), and no religion (19%).



Pregnancy and maternity

There are **66.7 births** per 1,000 women of childbearing age, which is the second highest rate in the country.



Marriage and civil partnership

42% of people (aged 16 and over) in the borough are married or in a registered civil partnership.

¹ONS additional guidance on gender identity estimates from Census 2021 in England and Wales – uncertainty and appropriate use
²About the borough | London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Our Workforce

As an employer in Barking and Dagenham, understanding the profile of our workforce is key to recognising the strengths and potential within our organisation. By having a workforce that reflects the diversity of the borough the council serves, it allows us to better understand and respond to the needs of our residents.



Age

Over half our workforce (53.5%) are aged 40-59. **Only 9.3%** are under 30.



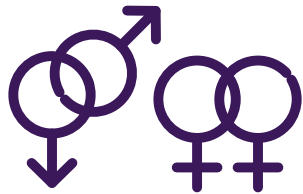
Disability

5.3% of our workforce have shared they have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition.



Sex

Females make up **59.9%** of our workforce, while males account for 40.1%.



Sexual Orientation

2.4% of our workforce have shared they are LGBT+.



Gender Reassignment

27.67% of employees have disclosed no Gender reassignment. **0.69%** have indicated that they would prefer not to say. **71.64%** have not made a declaration.



Race

91% of our workforce have declared their ethnicity. **55%** identify as White/ White British. **18%** identify as Black/ Black British. **12%** identify as Asian/ Asian British.



Religion or belief

59% of our staff have declared their religion. Of those, **31%** are Christian and **8.2%** Muslim.

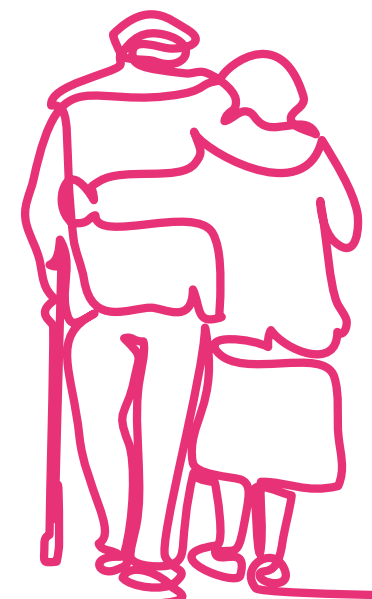


Our Equality Objectives 2025-2029

Over the next four years, the council is committed to building a more inclusive and equal community. This means breaking down barriers that prevent people from feeling safe, supported, and valued, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.

Our equality objectives focus on creating real opportunities for everyone to learn, grow, and succeed. By listening to lived experiences and understanding where unfairness still exists, we'll work together to make meaningful changes so that we are:

- 1. Closing Equality Gaps** – taking action to address known inequalities that exist in access to opportunities and support in areas like employment, healthcare, housing and education and ensuring we have ways of identifying the gaps we don't yet know about.
- 2. Providing Fair and Accessible Public Services** – making sure our services are designed to meet the needs of all our residents, regardless of their background, ability or circumstance and underpinned by our Customer Experience Strategy to ensure that every interaction is shaped by empathy, inclusivity, and continuous improvement.
- 3. Promoting Cohesion and Integration** – creating a borough where people from different backgrounds can connect and thrive together.
- 4. Being an Inclusive Employer** – the organisation will strive to be an inclusive employer, with equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do. We ensure our employee policies and procedures are fair and consistent, supporting staff wellbeing, enabling everyone to be their best and authentic self at work.



Objective 1

Closing Equality Gaps

Many of our residents don’t always get the same opportunities as others. Not everyone has the same chances to live in a safe home, stay healthy, feel secure each day, or find a good job.

Sometimes these inequalities are compounded because of someone’s ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, or their financial situation. When all these things come together, they can create even more challenges and make life more difficult. For a borough as diverse as ours, intersectionality is an important factor in understanding equity and disadvantage.

These problems aren’t simply about chance, but more often a result of systems, policies and practices, some of which were created a long time ago and no longer work fairly for everyone, and others that continue to reinforce inequality today.

We want to change that. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is about listening to people, understanding their lived experience and using data to tackle disadvantage that impacts the lives of our residents. Our aspiration is to make sure everyone in our community is treated fairly and has access to the tailored support they need to succeed – recognising that not everyone starts from the same place, and some may need more than others to reach equitable outcomes.

Priority 1

Everyone has access to safe, secure, and good-quality housing.

A stable home is more than a place to live; it is the foundation from which individuals and communities can thrive.

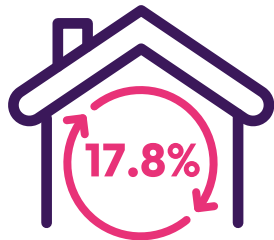
In recent years, we have been one of the leading councils in London for building new social housing. However, the demand for affordable housing is far greater than the number of properties available and our waiting list continues to grow.

This makes it hard for residents, especially those with lower incomes or experiencing hardship, to find secure places to live. These households are faced with increasing private sector rents and a rise in “no-fault” evictions adding to housing instability.

What we know...



22.5% of Barking and Dagenham households are living in fuel poverty and struggling to heat their homes.



17.8% of households did not have enough bedrooms in their property on Census Day – the second highest figure in the country. Overcrowding is more prevalent in ethnic minority households.



At the end of 2024/25, there were **1,072** households living in temporary accommodation.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Housing accessibility for residents with different needs Identifying the needs of our residents so that they can live safely and independently for longer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Plan sets out a vision for housing that accommodates to different groups of residents, including affordable housing, older persons housing and wheelchair-accessible housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the new Housing Strategy, an engagement session is due to take place in September 2025 with disabled residents to understand their housing needs which will inform actions we take in our Housing Strategy. Accessible Housing Register to ensure faster lets and better matching. Borough-wide home visits with on-the-spot fixes and referrals to ensure residents receive help earlier and live in safe homes.
Homelessness Young adults, ethnic minorities, and single-parent households are disproportionately represented in homelessness services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness Needs Assessment undertaken by Public Health. The ShowerBox project – The first purpose-built facility in the country that provides free, hot showers and clean underwear to people experiencing homelessness. Early arrears help, mediation and partnership prevention available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the Homelessness Health Strategy with Northeast London Integrated Care Board informed the Homelessness Needs Assessment.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Temporary Accommodation Many families face long stays in temporary accommodation with poor conditions. Out-of-borough placements disrupt access to services and support networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pilot weekend drop-in for families to provide safe play space for children, jointly with Ripple Road School and The Source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Safe Sleep project supplying resources for vulnerable new families and babies.
Fuel poverty We know that poor housing and overcrowding has health implications, especially for vulnerable groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cosy Homes scheme based on resident income.▪ Retrofit programme aimed at keeping homes warmer at a lower cost.▪ Creation of a network of warm spaces across the borough with our partners.▪ Established B&D Energy which is actively working to tackle fuel poverty by providing affordable energy solutions and promoting energy efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ As of 2024/25, B&D Energy supplies hot water and electricity to 2600+ dwellings in the borough – by 2030, the company aims to reach over 7000 dwellings.

Priority 2

Everyone can live a healthy and happy life by giving them the right care and support when they need it most.

Our Care and Support Team delivers services for adults, children, and people with disabilities. The organisation strives to make sure services are fair and inclusive, but we know that many residents still face inequality due to their background, gender, age, disability or financial situation. For children in particular, the service recognises the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and are committed to designing trauma-informed services that provide the right support at the right time.

Public Health data shows residents in the borough have lower life expectancy, more and earlier long-term health problems, and some have limited access to support services. Some groups are more affected than others and are less likely to access the help they need.

Through a deeper understanding of these inequalities, we can better tailor our services, including through neighbourhood working, to meet the diverse needs of our residents and create a more accessible and empowering support system for all. We want people to have the opportunity to lead healthy, happy and independent lives for longer, whilst knowing that they can connect to the right support when needed.

What we know...



Our borough has the highest premature mortality rate in London.



29.8% of households have at least one person who identifies as disabled, the highest proportion in London.



Healthy life expectancy at birth is 58.1 years for males and 60.1 years for females (London: 63.8 and 65 respectively).
(Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).

Cosy Homes Scheme

According to the 2021 Census, Barking and Dagenham had the highest levels of fuel poverty in the country. The Cosy Homes Scheme provided energy-saving measures to lower-income households across the borough, including cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, external wall insulation, air source heat pumps, and solar PV panels. This initiative improved energy efficiency and reduced household costs.



Funded by government grants and energy company obligations, the scheme had strict eligibility criteria, typically based on the household’s Energy Performance Certificate rating, income, or cold-related illness. Notably, 77% of recipients were from BAME backgrounds. Nearly 12,000 properties have already benefited.

CASE STUDY



Barking and Dagenham residents aged 50 and over more commonly experience pre-frailty and frailty than peers in London and England.



67.3% of adults are overweight (including obese), and 38% of adults are physically inactive (Public Health Outcomes Framework).



Unhealthy weight at Year 6 (age 10–11) is **44.2%** – the highest in London and fourth highest in England in 2023/24 (PHOF).

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Adult Social Care		
Ensuring equity of access to adult care and support Working to remove barriers that might prevent people from getting the help they need and tailoring services to meet the diverse needs of our residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual analysis of people accessing adult social care carried out. In 2023 there was an underrepresentation of people of an Asian ethnic background which led to 2024 Healthwatch report on resident experiences of social care access. This led to improved accessibility of information on social care and reduced underrepresentation. Data recording on Liquid Logic monitored and improved between 2023-25. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and improve the recording of protected characteristics on Liquid Logic, including in relation to sexual orientation and religion/belief. Annual agreement of equality objectives to understand and/or address any areas of under or over-representation.

Healthwatch Report on Access to Social Care in the South Asian Community

In 2024, Healthwatch conducted a report on perceptions of access to social care within South Asian communities in Barking and Dagenham. The report highlighted underrepresentation in accessing Adult Social Care (ASC) services, with key issues including lack of awareness among new arrivals, stigma around accepting external help, and religious considerations.

Nine recommendations were made (see full report). The Adults' Commissioning team has already begun implementing some of these, focusing on improving access to services, building trust, and working with faith groups to increase ASC uptake.

CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps..
Ensuring culturally competent, inclusive adult care and support Adapting care practices, communication, and support to the needs, beliefs and preferences of individual's based on their cultural background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service design has been informed by cultural competence analysis, e.g. substance misuse in 2023, homecare in 2025. Ongoing staff training and practice improvement workshops on cultural competence and equality and diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure inclusive design of commissioned services, including recommissioning of carer support, care technology and direct payment support. Ongoing programme of staff training and practice improvement workshops in relation to cultural competence. Agreeing and implementing actions in relation to LGBTQ+ inclusive practice in adult social care.
Hearing from seldom-heard groups in Adult Social Care We will collaborate closely with underrepresented and marginalised communities to ensure their voices inform service design and delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on care and support gathered via weekly phone calls and regular surveys – including equalities insights. Insight work carried out with resident groups on particular topics – e.g. autism, experience of carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematically work with seldom-heard groups when designing services and projects by completing Equality Impact Assessments and a co-design plan. Setting up and piloting a new 'co-production group' for residents with lived experience of social care, including seldom heard groups.
Improve support and services for individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism We know that those with a learning disability and autistic people face a range of challenges around health, wellbeing, employment, housing, safety and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024-29 Learning Disability and Autism strategy aims to tackle inequalities, by strengthening co-production working with residents to gain insights to inform the development of inclusive, supportive communities and reducing barriers faced by residents in all six themes within the strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling Safe - Good Health - The Right Support - A Good Home - More Job Opportunities - Making Friends & Connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce training and development focussed on learning disability and autism, including roll out of national training (Oliver McGowan) in addition to bespoke local initiatives designed and delivered by people with lived experience. Establish a new 'learning disability and autism hub' from which to provide in-person information, advice, activities, and community connection for residents including carers. Develop support for young adults (eligible for adult social care and below the threshold) to improve access to opportunities for people moving into adulthood including employment, health, housing. Develop an autism friendly borough programme to create positive awareness about neurodiversity across a range of community settings, new approaches to facilitating peer support and connections.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Support carers in their caring role Carers provide valuable care and support in maintaining the health and independence of our vulnerable residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022-25 Carer Charter delivery includes supporting carers more likely to face barriers – e.g. carers of working age and/or with a disability. In partnership with Carers of Barking and Dagenham and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) developed a training offer to identify hidden carers and refer them to Carers of Barking and Dagenham. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of the refreshed Carer Charter to support carer groups more likely to face systemic inequalities – e.g. women, LGBTQ+, disabled carers.
Public Health		
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) & JSNA Deep Dive programme Supports effort to reduce health inequalities and improve healthy life expectancy through partnership working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JSNA 2024-27 published on Council website. JSNA Deep Dives underway, including Homelessness Health Needs Assessment and Adult Mental Health Needs Assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further deep dives planned for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal Carers' Health and Wellbeing Physical Activity and Inactivity Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Children & Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing Dying Well Overweight & Obesity in Children & Young People These deep dives are used to inform targeted projects for specific cohorts.
Community-specific initiatives Identifying health disparities within specific community groups and developing targeted initiatives to address these inequalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of participatory funding and social prescribing has led to projects such as Befriending Service. Faith and Health Network, which supports faith leaders to raise awareness and improve health of the people they work with. Community Health and Wellbeing pop ups – including menopause pop-up, diabetes management during Ramadan pop-up. Commissioned community organisations to support targeted suicide prevention work for Eastern European communities where suicide rates higher. Looking into vaccine hesitancy in Black African and Eastern European communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-based social research into attitudes to mental health and experience of using mental health services. Mental Health Summit to identify next steps in supporting better mental health cross the community. Community Pop-Up Clinics planned once a month from September 2025 onwards. Improving health literacy and reduce health inequalities in marginalised faith groups and Bangladeshi community. Research project to look into vaccine hesitancy in Eastern European and Black African communities.

ShowerBox

In 2025, the borough partnered with ShowerBox and Barking Churches Unite to launch ShowerBox Barking, the UK's first permanent, purpose-built facility for people experiencing homelessness. Located at Barking Learning Centre, it offers hot showers, underwear, respite, and refreshments, helping to narrow health outcome gaps for this group.

Since March 2025, usage has steadily increased, with up to 19 users per session, and the service now reaches both women and men.



CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Children's Social Care		
Inclusive practice This includes examples of cultural competence through embedding race, ethnicity, gender, and culture into therapy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The New Town Culture programme which provides training opportunities for social care practitioners, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to integrate creative practices into their work. Commitment to Anti-Racist Practice Pledge. Black Lives Matter Action Plan and Walking in my Shoes anti-racism training. Trans-cultural placements. 21 children and young people with intersectional identities referred; 9 of the individuals received culturally matched therapy. Case studies show impact on trans, British Bangladeshi, and immigrant children navigating race, gender, and cultural identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand culturally matched therapist access and offer choice-based therapist selection. Develop inclusive resources, practice, process maps, and reflective supervision to embed anti-racist, culturally sensitive practice.
Care leaver outcomes Care leavers in our borough have significant levels of rent arrears, putting them at high risk of homelessness. They may also be unaware of support available to transition out of the care system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working in partnership with Beam to support Care Leavers to maximise income, sustain or manage tenancies & employment. This includes Mental Health support with qualified professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Anti-Poverty Strategy aims to introduce a structured, age-appropriate life skills curriculum starting in early adolescence (e.g. age 11), covering topics like budgeting, saving, digital banking, and tenancy basics. Revisit making 'care experience' a protected characteristic in line with other boroughs.

Black Lives Matter Anti-Racism Initiative and Plan

Following the death of George Floyd in 2020, the Children's Social Care team developed a Black Lives Matter Action Plan to reduce prejudice, discrimination, and bias.

Initiatives included:

- Coaching minoritised Team Managers into senior roles
- Providing non-Eurocentric toys in Family Time Contact centres
- Educating foster carers on black children's hair care
- Establishing a BLM forum in Youth Justice
- Reframing cultural competence and stop-and-search training
- Including more black and global majority managers in decision panels

Impacts include career progression for black managers, improved family centre spaces, culturally aware foster carers, and an embedded anti-racist approach in staff training and practice.

CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Children's Social Care		
Youth Justice Service Prevent offending and reoffending among children and young people, with a strong focus on fairness, inclusion, and safeguarding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment to anti-discriminatory practice. ▪ Mission statement that highlights the need to focus on inequality. ▪ Celebration of Black History Month through art, spoken word, poetry and creative writing. ▪ Reporting of over representation within the youth justice cohort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of disparity tool to better monitor and understand over and under representation across youth justice cohort. ▪ Development of young men's programme, focusing on understanding their heritage. ▪ Delivery of Gender specific programmes for girls, such as the Go Girls programme. ▪ Ongoing celebrations of diversity.
Foster Carers We are committed to ensuring our foster carers are equipped to understand and respond to the diverse experiences and needs of the children in our care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We already have a very diverse group of foster carers from different backgrounds and experiences to meet the needs of our children in care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reinvigorated campaign to recruit additional foster carers is planned, which will include carers who can meet the need of adolescents and children with significant additional needs. This will be in addition to expand our recruitment generally.

Priority 3

Ensure fair access to jobs and training by removing barriers to employment and opening up opportunities for all

Our B&D Works service ensures that everyone, regardless of their background or current circumstance, can find a good job and improve their skills.

Employment gives people purpose, independence, and the chance to build a better life for themselves and their families. But for many residents, there are barriers such as low income, limited education, or disability that can stand in the way opportunities.

By ensuring access to jobs and training is fair and inclusive, we will create pathways for people to achieve their goals, unlock their potential and raise aspirations.

What we know...



We have the **highest** proportion of residents with **no qualifications** in the whole of London.



Over a quarter of residents are economically inactive – including high numbers of women caring for family.



Employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities are below the London average.



LBBD has **highest rate** of unemployment and Universal Credit claimants in London and second highest in England.

LBBD Adult College and WIN: Empowering Bangladeshi and Pakistani Women

As part of the Mayor of London's Social Integration Strategy, the Workforce Integration Network (WIN) commissioned research into barriers faced by Bangladeshi and Pakistani women in accessing good work. LBBD Adult College, with a high intake of economically inactive women (86% female learners), participated in workshops and focus groups to explore issues such as racism, language barriers, childcare, financial dependency, and confidence.

The College was praised for supporting women's goals and confidence. The project will conclude with a roundtable event in September 2025, informing the next phase ahead of the July 2025 research publication.

CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Employment Support (B&D Works) We recognise the importance of providing support that is targeted to meet the diverse needs of our residents, especially those facing complex barriers to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported over 10,000 residents into work over the last decade. Provided specialist Supported Employment programmes for people with learning disabilities, SEND and/or autism, physical and mental health conditions. Created back to work schemes for older people struggling to work after pandemic. Improved referral pathways for people accessing disability and debt advice services. Designed support for employers to create more flexible jobs, adapted jobs for people with disabilities, and apply for Access to Work. Research with the GLA about barriers for Bangladeshi and Pakistani women returning to work in the borough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen pathways to work for people facing inequity, including carers (who are more likely to be female), care-experienced young people, and those with learning disabilities, SEND and/or Autism. Test new types of support for people that have been out of work due to caring and health needs (Trailblazers, Connect to Work and Working Well initiatives). Integrate with health services to promote work as an option to improve overall health via social prescribing, the Joy App and co-location. Support those already in work to sustain employment by acting as an advocate between employer and employee – prevent unemployment due to ill health by utilising reasonable adjustments, flexible working etc. Increase the number and range of opportunities that meet people's needs for flexible and supported employment. Improve access to childcare for parents seeking to return to work.
Skills and Training Providing skills and training support is essential for increasing access to fulfilling and sustainable employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported c.15,000 residents to upskill over the last decade including functional skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and vocational courses. Created new Supported Employment and apprenticeship opportunities for people with learning disabilities within the council and other local employers. Improved support, work focused learning and work experience for people with learning disabilities and Autism studying at the Adult College. BD Works and Adult college supporting women from global majority communities to understand and access non-traditional career routes (beyond caring and early years roles) and overcome language barriers to secure good work. (e.g. careers in logistics, transport planning etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop meaningful and personalised action plans for neurodivergent individuals which detail vocational profiling, goals and utilise a 'Place and Train' ethos to ensure the right fit for this cohort. Start integrating service action plans across the Council to ensure employment is detailed through all as an opportunity. Address borough-wide weaknesses in autism support. Integrate across work, skills and health interventions to improve access to services for key groups most impacted by cost-of-living crisis and facing most severe labour market inequalities. Improve pathways for neurodivergent individuals into new sectors including training, work experience, internships and apprenticeships.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Pathways into growth sectors We want to create opportunities for our residents to enter growing workforce industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established careers programmes to support young people and those from low-income communities to understand and access jobs and careers in key growth sectors (food, film and construction). Launched the Make It Here programme with including a network of local further and higher education providers to strengthen pathways into the film industry for residents from disadvantaged backgrounds. Worked to improve the quality of opportunities available by using our planning and procurement powers to broker job opportunities and promoting the real London Living Wage in the Council's supply chain and high employment sectors including construction, care and catering. People with physical and mental disabilities sit on SEND Board overseeing plans to support the transition to adulthood for people with SEND. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create vocational training courses to move residents quickly into employment alongside additional ESOL courses or higher-level vocational courses to support career progression. Work with local skills providers to identify and communicate pathways into specific sectors (e.g. routes into education with Coventry University London). Continue to promote better quality work by requiring suppliers to pay the London Living Wage, brokering opportunities on major local developments and tackling insecurity in the care sector. Dedicated Skills Builder Programmes for young people, care experienced young people and those with SEND/Autism/LD to understand and experience the construction sector.
Youth unemployment/ NEETs We have a slightly higher than London average rate of NEETs and Unknowns in LBBB at 3.6%, but better than national.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council supports internships and apprenticeships for local people. The Council has a dedicated team that engages and supports young people aged 16-19 who are NEET. The Council convenes a network of providers supporting young people that are NEET to strengthen coordination and support in the borough. There are also dedicated referral pathways to B&D Works for care experienced young people and those that are NEET (with a guaranteed appointment within 48 hours). During the pandemic, the Council coordinated a successful Kickstart programme to minimise youth unemployment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide dedicated support for young people who are NEET. Strengthen engagement with people with SEND before they leave education about potential employment opportunities. Continue to strengthen vocational opportunities to support the school-to-work transition for young people in the borough.

Priority 4

Give children and young people the education, support, and opportunities they need to succeed and reach their full potential.

Education is at the heart of our ambition for a fairer and more inclusive Barking and Dagenham. It is a powerful tool for breaking cycles of inequality and opening doors to opportunity. For our young people, school should provide a safe and structured environment to learn, grow, and imagine a different future.

Our schools are recognised for their high standards and inclusive practices. A very high proportion of children and young people are educated successfully within mainstream settings. Our schools and early years settings work persistently and determinedly to provide the support and opportunity, so that children and young people can grow and thrive. This is particularly important for those who face some disadvantage, for example, through poverty or having additional needs.

Outcomes for Children and Young People have improved steadily and significantly over the last decade and have moved to be in line or slightly above national levels for most indicators. The ambition is for London standards which is very challenging in the poorest borough in London with considerable movement in and out of schools. However, the gap to London is narrowing and some schools are already achieving above London standards. Our disadvantaged groups perform relatively well on most measures.

This priority is not focused just on academic achievement – it also aims to nurture confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging. We will continue to work with schools and partners to identify and overcome barriers to educational success, ensuring that all learners, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed in a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

What we know...



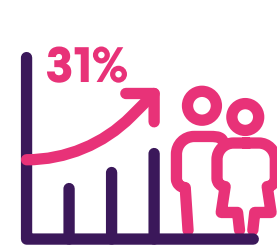
As of 2025, over 98% of our schools are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.



Educational attainment in our schools is mainly in line with the national average, and slightly below London average.



88% of two-year-old children who are disadvantaged attend an early years setting.



31% of the total school population are eligible for the Pupil Premium and are classified as disadvantaged.



Our schools consistently maintain some of the lowest levels of suspensions and exclusions in the country.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Early Years Provision and School Readiness We want our children to be emotionally, socially and physically prepared to thrive in the school environment. It is a crucial foundation for lifelong learning, wellbeing and success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Excellent support available to settings to engage with each other and develop provision.▪ 'Bitesize' well-attended information sessions and weekend workshops for childminders.▪ Our use of specialist services such as speech and language therapy has further developed.▪ Early Years Family Hubs supporting settings to manage the increasing number of children with SEND.▪ A skilled Portage Team providing support to under 5's with complex and additional needs to help school integration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Improving the percentage of children at the end of reception achieving their 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) to national and then London levels. Since the pandemic, outcomes have improved year on year, which is positive in light of SEND challenges and increasing poverty in the borough.▪ Further expansion of the successful 'Nursery Readiness Project' in order to enhance child attainment in each of the GLD areas of learning by utilising the vital role that parents/carers play, both before children attend nursery and during their nursery/ school education.
Inclusivity in schools We recognise the importance of creating welcoming and supportive environments where every child, regardless of their background or needs, can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Highly inclusive mainstream schools, recognised through Ofsted Inspection and national publication.▪ Pioneering in development of Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs) at scale. We have the highest proportion in the country, educating children with high levels of SEND in a mainstream setting. This has attracted significant government interest.▪ Inclusion Pledge co-constructed with schools – setting out shared principles.▪ Race and Social Justice (RSJ) Initiative 2020/25 which has celebrated and further supported schools with their RSJ practice, including through partnership work with the Barking & Dagenham Youth Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Further support and work with schools, particularly in the secondary phase, to develop provision for children and young people with more complex SEND who are moving from the primary to the secondary phase.▪ Continued lobbying via Council and MPs to secure fair funding for schools and the government to resource properly the high level of SEND needs and recognise, historic underfunding.

Award-Winning Inclusive Zones in Primary Schools

Mainstream schools in the borough have been nationally recognised for their commitment to inclusive education, amid rising SEND demand. William Ford Church of England Junior School, featured on Channel 4’s ‘Jamie’s Dyslexia Revolution’ in 2025, has a ‘Lighthouse Provision’ for SEND pupils, encouraging diverse ways of learning.

The school recently received a Bronze Pearson National Teaching Award and retained its Centre of Excellence status from the Inclusion Quality Mark.

CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
<p>Narrowing gaps in educational attainment</p> <p>We will focus on closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers to ensure that all our young people can reach their full potential.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Borough’s combined Key Stage 2 ‘Expected Standard’ in Reading, Writing, and Maths is above the 2024 national average, but below the London average. GCSE performance continues to build on the improvements made in 2019 with increases across all published headline indicators at Key Stage 4 from 2019. Barking and Dagenham’s Attainment 8 score for 2024 was 47.2. This score is above the 2024 national average of 46.4. Positively, the Progress 8 score for most schools in the borough is above 0 and also above the national Progress 8 score for non-disadvantaged pupils (0.16). The disadvantaged Progress 8 score of 92% of schools in the borough is also above the national disadvantaged score of -0.57. At A level, an attainment gap remains at A*-B and A*-A between Barking and Dagenham and national outcomes, however the Borough’s A*- B attainment has improved by 8.8 percentage points compared to 2019 and the gap to national has closed significantly. Attainment of pupils from a White British background has over a long period of time been lower compared to some benchmarks. There is likely a complex mix of factors playing a role here, including disadvantage and deprivation. Some of these factors are also being seen at a national level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range in Key Stage 2 results for pupils across schools continues to be very broad. Education is working with Barking & Dagenham School Improvement Partnership (BDSIP) to commission support to narrow the range and improve performance where results are below the local average. Improving the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils, including those receiving Free School Meals, and drawing them closer in line with their non-disadvantaged peers. We will focus on this through supporting schools to improve the attainment and progress of all pupils through adaptive teaching and pastoral support focused on pupil need, as this should in turn benefit pupils who are most disadvantaged.

Priority 5

Tackle poverty by helping residents to access the support they need and build strong foundations for financial security

Barking and Dagenham continues to face some of the highest levels of poverty and deprivation in London, impacting residents’ ability to access basic needs and life opportunities.

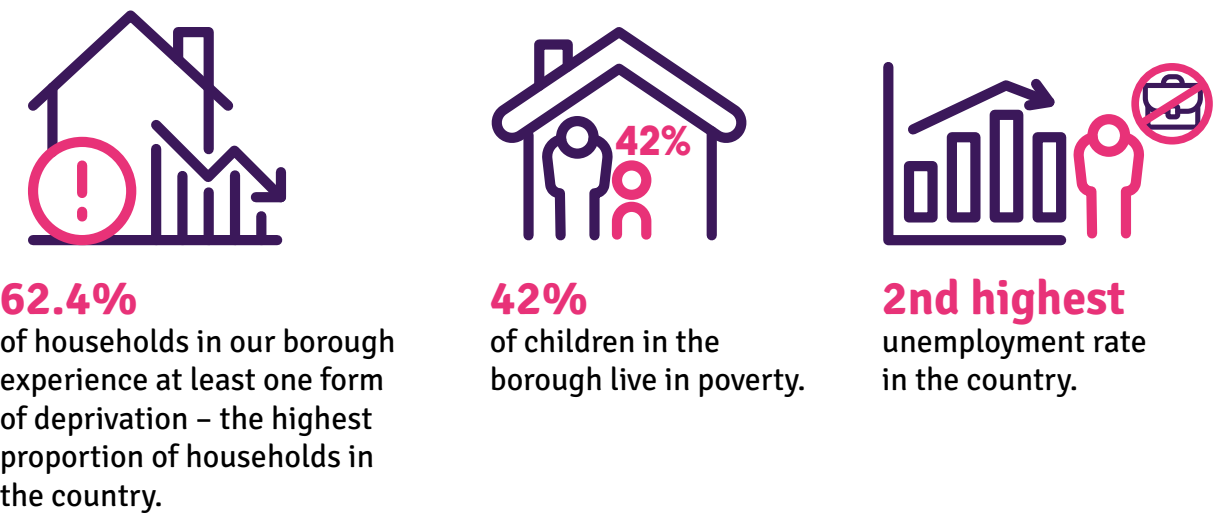
Many families face financial hardship due to low income and rising living costs, and we know families with children, older residents, and those with long-term health conditions or disabilities are disproportionately affected.

We also know that the impacts of poverty go far beyond a lack of money as it can affect nearly every aspect of person’s life. Living in poverty can lead to poor physical and mental health, lower educational attainment and limits access to good quality housing.

These wider impacts create cycles of hardship that are difficult to break which is why it is important that we look beyond the offer of short-term financial support. We must continue to build inclusive and accessible services and focus on early intervention and prevention. Neighbourhood working is a key part of our response, providing holistic, relational support that understands and works with all the factors impacting residents’ health and wellbeing.

Our new Anti-Poverty Strategy, ‘Foundations for Change: Tackling Poverty’ outlines our short-term focus on test-and-learn interventions, aiming to address barriers for specific, vulnerable cohorts.

What we know...



Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Support for parents We have the highest proportion of single parents in the country, most of whom will be women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes and Money Hub currently signpost single parents to Child Maintenance Service (CMS). Any applications for Discretionary Funding are signposted to Child Maintenance Service. Resident engagement taking place currently to understand why single parents (predominantly women) are not accessing support through CMS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned awareness campaigns to increase child maintenance take up. Claiming child maintenance has been found to cut child poverty by 25% in single-parent families. Launch of Barking and Dagenham Safe Sleep packs initiative to support families with new-born babies by providing essential items and promoting safe infant care.
Benefit cap and disability benefits Many families in the borough are impacted by the benefits cap, which can be even more detrimental for households with a disabled member, as they often have higher costs associated with their care and equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in partnership with the Disablement Association of Barking and Dagenham (DABD) to support residents to claim PIP and request Mandatory Reconsideration Requests. Benefit Cap advice is given to residents when claiming any discretionary funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to work with the DABD to support residents in unclaimed disability benefits.

Priority 6

Creating a safer Barking and Dagenham where every person, no matter their background, feels safe and respected

No one should feel unsafe when walking the streets of Barking and Dagenham. Yet, residents often tell us that safety within the borough, particularly at night, is one of their biggest concerns.

Safety is essential for people to live their lives with confidence, dignity, and freedom. Women and girls, disabled people, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people from ethnic minority and faith communities may face greater risks or feel less safe due to discrimination or harassment. That’s why we’re working to understand these experiences and take action to address them, ensuring that safety is not a privilege, but a right for all.

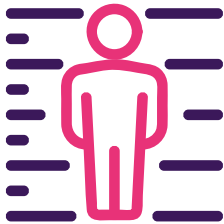
What we know...



42% of residents feel unsafe when outside in the local area after dark.



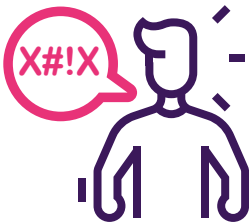
At 16.2 offences per 1,000 people, we have the highest rates of domestic abuse in London.



72% of domestic abuse suspects were current or former partners of the victim.



Victims aged 25-29 are most overrepresented in domestic abuse offences (2× borough average).



Hate crimes in Barking and Dagenham continue to reflect national trends, with racially motivated offences being the most commonly reported.

Baby Boxes for Mothers

As part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the council supports vulnerable mothers with ‘Safe Sleep’ baby boxes, providing essentials and connecting families to holistic support services. Distributed through Family Hubs at key development stages (birth, 3–6 months, 12 months), the boxes include a portable sleeping space, baby clothes, blankets, nappies, and accessories.



CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Domestic Abuse As a borough we persistently have the highest rates of reported domestic abuse in London, which requires a strong multi-agency approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered the recommendations of the Domestic Abuse Commission through our Domestic Abuse Improvement Programme. The DAC report considers cultural and local context. Delivery of several pilot schemes, including in relation to housing responses and child/adolescent to parent/carers violence. Implemented a Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff, including access to 10 days' paid leave for staff experiencing abuse. Delivery of White Ribbon and 16 days of Action events across organisations and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch the new Community Safety Partnership Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. Launch new mandatory domestic abuse training for all staff, to be refreshed annually. Work with our commissioned services to expand peer mentor and survivor-led support groups. Develop a Domestic Abuse and Housing policy to ensure robust responses for survivors and perpetrators of abuse.
Standing up to hate crime, intolerance and extremism Working to prevent hate crime through education and early intervention while building awareness and trust to increase reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a programme of activities to mark Islamophobia Awareness Month, in partnership with local faith leaders. Activities coordinated during Hate Crime Awareness week. Identified Hate ASB coordinated through the Community MARAC process. Faith based network. Prevent programme. Schools hate incident reporting. Anti-discrimination in the workplace training for all staff and monitoring. SLA's to remove hate graffiti within 24 hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of CSP structure to assess creation of multiagency forum to monitor Hate Crime and coordinate responses with partners including the VCFSE. Monthly hate based assaults/ abuse on Council reported to Community Safety to feed into multi-agency analysis and tasking. Developing zero tolerance response to hate crimes / incidents against staff including supporting Police and CPS through additional evidence. Explore training offers for staff and partners.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Community Safety Tackling violence against women and girls supporting vulnerable victims of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), keeping children and young people safe, and creating a safer borough overall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Youth at Risk Matrix (YARM) is the council's flagship youth justice programme with dedicated case workers and includes mentoring from Sparks to Life and out of court disposals to divert young people at the risk of violence. Coordination of case management of vulnerable adults (which can include those with mental health issues) as victims and perpetrators through the Community MARAC and other partner boards. Sparks for Life mentoring. Ending Gang Violence board. Adolescent neglect sub-group. Test purchasing to prevent under age sales of alcohol, cigarettes etc. Bleed kits and training for young people and professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy due to be launched in 2026. Nominated as Prevention Panel pilot for London to divert young people away from the risk of ASB and violence. Barking and Dagenham is one of the four boroughs in London piloting a new Partnership Prevention Panel approach. Commissioned services via grant funding including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Kinsella Trust, Barking Sports for Change (Lost Hours offer), Places of concern form piloted with schools and front-line services.
Vulnerable Adults Ensuring that the most vulnerable in our borough are safe, including those with learning disabilities, those who suffer with their mental health and older people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for vulnerable victims and perpetrators of ASB and exploitation through Community MARAC and CBO. Links to Drug and Alcohol and Homelessness support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuckooing panel Enforcement and prevention activity on illegal vapes, cigarettes Promotion of Responsible retailer schemes for alcohol etc.

Youth At Risk Matrix (YARM)

The YARM team provides comprehensive support to vulnerable young people at risk of offending, engaging early to address needs across home, school, and community. The team takes a holistic approach, considering factors like adverse childhood experiences, poverty, and domestic abuse, and refers young people to additional support services as needed.



CASE STUDY



Objective 2

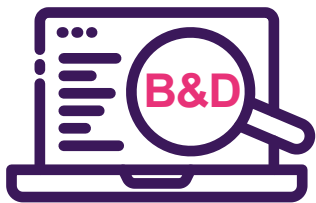
Providing Fair and Accessible Public Services

Everyone in our community deserves to feel welcome, heard and supported when using services provided by the Council. Yet, we know that some people face more challenges than others when trying to get the help they need. Language barriers, disabilities, lack of internet access or feeling like services aren’t designed for them can make a significant difference. This is a driver behind transforming our approach to prevention through neighbourhood working. This includes developing our hubs networks as key access points, increasing partnership working with the community and social sector to better reflect residents’ needs and wishes, and moving our support for residents from transactional to relational.

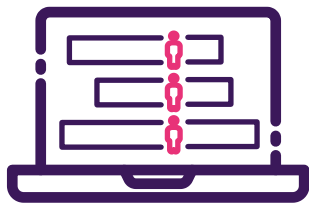
Ensuring that the services we provide are fair and accessible for all builds trust within our communities. We are committed to listening to residents’ feedback, learning from their experiences and removing the barriers, to make our services more responsive, more inclusive and easier to use. We have improved digital platforms to be user-friendly and accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities. We are delivering tailored digital literacy programmes specifically designed for older adults and economically inactive individuals to help their access; these programmes include hands-on training sessions and ongoing support to build confidence and competence in using digital tools.

We are currently developing a Customer Experience Strategy and have set up a customer experience workstream as part of our transformation programme to look at customer journeys, accessibility, inclusion. Our focus for improving customer access and experience is to simplify and improve the online information and advice provision so that it supports neighbourhood working and helps direct residents to the support they need. Simple, good quality information and intuitive navigation is key for self-triage, self-referral, and self-service.

What we know...



28% of residents think it is easy to access Council services.



Our Digital Inclusion Survey identified that around 1 in 10 respondents are “digitally disadvantaged”. Digitally disadvantaged in this context means residents that do less than 4 online activities.



Among those who do not go online frequently, the main reasons are that they prefer to talk to a real person, or they do not believe it is secure. One in five cite low confidence or having poor internet connectivity at home.



Around 150 languages are spoken in Barking and Dagenham, with the most common in schools including English, Bengali, Urdu, Romanian, Lithuanian, Yoruba, Albanian, Portuguese, Punjabi, and Polish.

Eastbrookend Country Park – Access for All Project

Improvements were made to footpaths at Eastbrookend Country Park to enhance accessibility for wheelchair users. Over £50,000 was secured to upgrade paths, especially around Tom Thumb Tom Lake, the borough’s only fully accessible fishing lake. Additional funding increased the number of benches and picnic areas for those with mobility issues.

CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Accessibility of public spaces Enhance accessibility of our parks, buildings and services so that everyone can use them safely and independently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dementia-friendly and neurodiverse-friendly offer at both Eastbury and Valence House. Recent revamp of Old Dagenham Park equipment to increase accessibility for children with mobility issues. Burial sites have been developed to ensure services are also appropriate for Muslim users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture team aims to go from Bronze to Silver for GLA dementia-friendly recognition. Parks team working on a signage project in open areas. Improvements in parks to be implemented including better footpaths for prams, wheelchairs and mobility scooters, and better lighting and handrails on bridges for safety.
Digital Inclusion Ensure that everyone, regardless of age, ability or income can access services online by breaking down barriers to technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive digital zones at BLC and Dagenham Library, developed alongside Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and Good Things Foundation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Contact team are carrying out a web content accessibility audit and are working alongside charities such as RNIB to ensure new website design meets needs of users.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Equality Impact Assessments Proactively assess the impact of service delivery to ensure fairness and prevent discrimination in our decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Firm Foundations staff training to promote high quality EQIAs within Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a revised Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) framework that more explicitly considers health inequalities. This will help ensure that our policies and decisions are not only equitable in general, but also responsive to the specific health-related barriers faced by different groups. By embedding health inequality.
Data and Insight Build an understanding of residents and service users to help identify diverse needs, reduce inequalities and shape services that are fair and inclusive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquid Logic fields updated. Staff reminded of expectations. Strategy Steering Group reviewing consistency. Use of Borough Data Explorer, 'R' programme for granular borough-specific data on residents. Data profiles created on intranet and public pages using Census 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved collection of Equalities Monitoring data from services.
Inclusive Representation Ensuring cultural programming reflects the borough's diversity and lived experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Culture & Heritage Service has embedded inclusion across its programming, reflecting the intersectional identities of residents. This includes projects like New Town Culture (which embeds creativity into social care and youth justice) and the Women's Museum, which centre under-represented voices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop further innovative ways of working that reflects the borough's diversity, ensuring future generations see themselves represented in the borough's heritage.
Access and Participation Removing barriers so all residents can engage with culture and heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service has prioritised equitable access by providing safe, inclusive spaces through libraries, museums, and community venues. The Cultural Partnership Group brings together over 150 creatives and organisations, fostering inclusive governance and community-led cultural development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure long-term access to cultural and heritage sites and activities for all residents, particularly those with protected characteristics, by embedding inclusive design and outreach in all future planning.
Platforming Underrepresented Voices Creating space for marginalised communities to lead and be heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Women's Museum, opened in 2024, provides a platform to empower women, girls, trans and nonbinary communities, offering a space for creative and social dialogue. Cultural programming is being used to support the borough's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow the audience for more inclusive activities to support children and young people.

Objective 3

Promoting Cohesion and Integration

Barking and Dagenham is home to people from many different backgrounds, cultures and walks of life.

We are proud of our diversity and are committed to building a borough where all residents feel a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Fostering good relations between people is core to the Public Sector Equality Duty. Creating opportunities that bring people together, and allow time and space for connection and dialogue, nurtures understanding and mutual respect between communities.

We also want to create welcoming neighbourhoods as we know that when people feel safe, valued and connected to their local area they are more likely to engage with others and build strong, supportive networks – and stay in the borough. We want everyone to feel that they have the opportunity to take part in community life, contribute their ideas, and feel proud to call Barking and Dagenham home.

Our new Neighbourhoods Programme is establishing neighbourhood networks which act as places for residents, businesses and community groups to connect, support each other, or ask for help. They work with residents to find solutions for issues that matter most to residents.

What we know...



Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Volunteering To help residents build skills, confidence and make a positive impact in their communities. Volunteering opportunities are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 500 volunteering opportunities offered annually through the councils volunteering service, totalling over 19,500 hours contributed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and increase opportunities from all backgrounds to get involved in services, ensuring that volunteering reflects the diversity of our borough. Improve reporting around volunteering to reflect the true picture of volunteering in B&D including representation across different communities and protected characteristics.
Participatory budgeting Giving residents a voice in how money is spent, making decisions fair, transparent and community focused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Neighbourhood Fund operates resident led decision making and has granted over £1.5m in funding to VCFSE groups in B&D. In 2024, £68,810 was granted specifically towards E&D projects between 7 organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a youth-led grant fund to help stimulate and encourage interest in democratic decision-making, from the next generation of decision makers. Review the Neighbourhood Fund criteria, to ensure we are reaching more groups and creating better opportunities for a wider range of VCFSE groups to access funding.
Participation and Engagement Empower residents to share ideas, influence decisions and feel more connected to their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting the Dots programme designed at tackling inequalities and reducing barriers across different systems in practical and creative ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working widely with our VCFSE partners to increase resident voice in decision making.

Warm Spaces

In response to the cost of living crisis, the borough opened 'Warm Spaces' in community buildings for residents to escape the cold. Voluntary and community organisations, including faith buildings, can apply for funding to host a warm space. The scheme is now in its fifth iteration, with each organisation also running a Winter Activities Programme.



CASE STUDY

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Voluntary Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector We will use our relationship with the sector to encourage cohesion, bring people together, build stronger communities and get more people involved in decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Social Infrastructure contract nurtures and develops connections and networks across the VCFSE. Launch three neighbourhood networks, with further two in pipeline. Successful delivery of Community Chest, where this year 37 VCFSE organisations pitched and 19 have been awarded funding of £93,685. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a VCFSE Compact to outline and strengthen the principles of partnership working between VCFSE sector and Council. Continue to launch and then embed neighbourhood networks within communities and strengthen links to council and partner services.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) events (including council-led events) Support creative projects and events that bring people together, celebrate diversity and promote fairness by offering opportunities for those with protected characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrating Black History Month, with organisations across the borough who have delivered 20 programmes, including 15 community-led events and vibrant pop-up market in Barking. The Council, alongside Flipside and the LGBTQ+ Adult Social Network, attend Pride in London annually. Recognising contributions women have made to the borough during Women's Empowerment Month. First Islamophobia Awareness Month dinner event held in 2024. Council-led South Asian Heritage Month open event for staff and residents in 2023. Regular flag raisings for EDI related events, both council and community led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing the civic participation offer to encourage creative ways to celebrate or commemorate EDI events.
Barking and Dagenham Equality & Diversity (E&D) Community Fund Empowering local voluntary and community, faith, social enterprise sector (VCFSE) organisations to lead equality-focused initiatives that celebrate diversity, promote inclusion, and support residents with protected characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the E&D Community Fund, grassroots organisations have delivered impactful projects such as cultural celebrations, educational workshops, and inclusive community events in line with the E&D calendar. £10,000 is available annually for VCFSE groups to apply for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the evaluation process to ensure the fund is being used to ensure organisations are inclusive. Improve engagement ensuring diverse groups are aware of and can access the fund.



Objective 4

Being an Inclusive Employer

Our new People Strategy sets out Inclusion and Wellbeing as one of our five priorities. We strive to be an inclusive employer, with equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do. We ensure our employee policies and procedures are fair and consistent, supporting staff wellbeing, enabling everyone to be their best self at work.

We recognise that an environment where our staff feel valued, have positive wellbeing and psychological safety is one where they will be able to thrive. Our workforce should feel safe and connected and 'see people like themselves developing their careers at the council'. We continue to strive to have a workforce that is representative of the borough that we serve.

We nurture a culture of trust and transparency. Our staff networks are flourishing and play a key role in advising on policy. Allyship is encouraged. We proactively support staff wellbeing and address behaviours that do not reflect our DRIVE values.

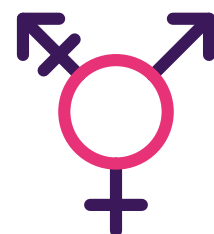
What we know...



Employees **aged 50 and over** are overrepresented at lower pay grades.



There is **underrepresentation** of Black and Minority Ethnic staff in senior leadership roles, despite strong representation at entry and mid-levels.



Disclosure rates for LGBTQ+, religion, gender reassignment remain low.



A **low percentage of staff** officially disclosed a disability when joining the organisation, however in our recent staff temperature check this figure was closer to 22%, suggesting under-reporting with reasons currently not known.



Our **gender pay gap** shows that representation of women in the two highest pay bands mirrors or exceeds the general representation in our workforce. There are far fewer women in the lower pay quarter.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Representation and diversity We want a workplace where all staff feel seen, valued, and supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched staff networks (Race Equality, LGBTQ+, Disability, etc.) to amplify underrepresented voices. Delivered inclusive leadership and unconscious bias training. Embedded Equality, Diversity & Inclusion principles into recruitment and onboarding. Promoted self-identification campaigns to encourage "share, not declare". Conducted gender and ethnicity pay gap reviews and action planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of staff declaring protected characteristics on our workforce system. Embed disclosure goals into team and leadership objectives.
Career progression opportunities We want to focus on creating an equitable environment for career progression opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched leadership development programmes. Introduced talent and succession planning with a focus on underrepresented groups. Embedded inclusive recruitment practices. Including values-based recruitment, diverse panels and anonymised recruitment. Delivered career development workshops and reverse/reciprocal mentoring schemes. Launched four apprenticeships for people with learning disabilities in Universal Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review pathways to leadership development and career progression. Monitor progression data by protected characteristics. Finalise our action planning through the focus groups with staff on the Unison Anti-Racism Charter. Embed equity goals into performance reviews and team planning.
Staff wellbeing Supporting physical and mental health through open dialogue and proactive support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellbeing conversations embedded in one-to-ones. Mental health first aiders trained and active. Access to Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) And specialist counselling services. Regular wellbeing campaigns and resources shared. Passport for reasonable adjustments. Preventative targeted support through public health funding. Violence and aggression zero tolerance campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen wellbeing check-ins across all teams. Review mental health training for managers. Co-produce wellbeing initiatives with staff networks. Review reporting arrangements for harassment, bullying and reporting and supporting staff affected by hate crime and violence and aggression.

Area of focus	The story so far...	Our next steps...
Staff Networks and allyship Our staff networks play a vital role in creating a more inclusive workplace by giving our staff a voice, support, and sense of belonging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active staff networks (e.g. Race Equality, LGBT+, Disability). Senior sponsors assigned to each network. Allyship promoted through events and campaigns. Networks consulted on policy and service design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active networks exist but engagement varies, and a review with the networks is underway. Increase allyship training and recognition. Increase visibility and influence of networks in decision-making. Provide dedicated time and resources for network leads.
Practice and Workforce Development Ensuring high-quality, inclusive care by supporting a diverse workforce and addressing discrimination, gender inequality, and representation gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened governance with risk registers and policy reviews. New One Panel for safeguarding and learning. Improved transitions planning for young people. Engaged with staff networks (e.g. LGBT+ network). Annual deep dives into. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build capacity in safeguarding and quality assurance with anti-racism training. Improve data collection on protected characteristics (especially sexual orientation). Deliver five equality objectives. Enhance staff development with inclusive training. Advocate for better pay and conditions in the care sector.



Group	Chair	Email
Women’s Network	Usha Manic	Womens.Network@lbbd.gov.uk Usha.Manic@lbbd.gov.uk
New & Expectant Parents Network (Women’s Network sub-group)	Mandeep Mahadeo and Laura Powell	parent-network@lbbd.gov.uk
Menopause Support Network (Women’s Network sub-group)	Michelle Coleman	Michelle.Coleman@lbbd.gov.uk
STARE Network	Natalia Monvoisin	STAREstaffnetwork@lbbd.gov.uk
Early Careers Network	Kajal Pabari & Edmund Gutberlet	EarlyCareersNetwork@lbbd.gov.uk
LGBT+ Network	Carlos Ojelade & Athena Parnell	LGBTStaff@lbbd.gov.uk
EASE Network	Amolak Tatter	Amolak.Tatter@lbbd.gov.uk
Neurodiversity Group (EASE Network sub-group)	Arabjan Iqbal and Athena Parnell	Arabjan.Iqbal@lbbd.gov.uk Athena.Parnett@lbbd.gov.uk

Early Careers Network

The Early Careers Network is a staff network that brings together individuals at the start of their careers, whether they’re graduates, apprentices, career changers or new to local government. Through regular events such as lunch and learns, monthly lunches in the office, the network fosters connection, learning and peer support.

As part of the council’s broader commitment to ED&I, the network plays a key role in creating equitable experiences for early career professionals. It provides a platform for diverse voices to be heard and contributes feedback on workforce policies and strategies.

CASE STUDY



How we will monitor progress

The 'next steps' highlighted throughout the strategy will be translated into an action plan with the specific steps the Council will take to achieve each equality objective.

An annual progress report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee appraising progress against the action plan and highlighting key achievements.

A strategy progress report will also be published annually on the Council's website, with a comprehensive review of the strategy to take place within four years.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility

The design of services, environments, and information so that they can be used by everyone, including people with disabilities or other access needs.

Allyship

The practice of actively supporting and advocating for the rights and inclusion of marginalised or underrepresented groups.

Bias

A tendency, inclination, or prejudice for or against something or someone, which can be conscious (explicit) or unconscious (implicit), and may affect decisions and behaviours.

Cohesion

The process of building shared values, mutual respect, and strong relationships between individuals and groups within a community.

Discrimination

Unfair or unequal treatment of an individual or group based on characteristics such as race, gender, disability, age, religion, or sexual orientation.

Diversity

The presence of differences within a given setting, including differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and socio-economic background.

Equality

Ensuring that everyone is treated fairly and has equal access to opportunities, resources, and services, regardless of their background or identity.

Equity

Recognising that different people have different needs and addressing those differences by providing varying levels of support to achieve fair outcomes.

Inclusion

Creating environments where all individuals feel respected, accepted, and able to fully participate and contribute.

Intersectionality

A framework for understanding how aspects of a person's identity (such as race, gender, class, and disability) combine to create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege.

Marginalised Groups

Communities or individuals who are excluded from full participation in society due to systemic barriers or discrimination.

Protected Characteristics

Specific attributes or traits that form part of a person's identity and are legally safeguarded from discrimination and unfair treatment under the Equality Act 2010. These characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Reasonable Adjustments

Changes or modifications made to remove or reduce disadvantages experienced by disabled people in accessing services, employment, or education.

Representation

The presence and visibility of diverse individuals and groups in decision-making, leadership, and public life.

Unconscious Bias

Social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their conscious awareness, which can influence behaviour and decisions.

Building a fairer future together



**Barking &
Dagenham**