

# Gender Equality Charter and Plan of Action 2016/17

# Introduction



*Cllr Sade Bright*

At the heart of the Council's vision and values is a commitment to creating a fair and just society where everyone is treated equally, discrimination is tackled and the barriers to equality are removed.

Barking & Dagenham has a proud history in promoting gender equality from the 18th Century writer and philosopher, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the early suffragette movement to the workers of Fords who helped secure the equal pay legislation we enjoy today.

Since 1974 the constituency of Barking has been represented in Parliament by female MPs. Jo Richardson was elected Member of Parliament for Barking in 1974, a position she held until her death in 1994. As shadow spokesperson for Women's Rights from 1983 to 1992 she campaigned for greater equal opportunities and protection from discrimination. After her death at the age of 70 in 1994, the then Labour leader John Smith said 'No-one in our party has fought harder or to greater effect on behalf of women'. Since then Margaret Hodge has continued the work to improve outcomes for residents of Barking.

Barking and Dagenham is the first local authority to develop a Gender Equality Charter, working with elected representatives, Council officers, local businesses and the voluntary and community sector to form a plan of action to improve gender equality in the borough.

We are inviting borough residents, businesses, voluntary and community organisations and other statutory partners to sign up to the Charter and the action plan that accompanies it.

# Why Gender Equality?

Barking and Dagenham is the first local authority to develop a Gender Equality Charter, working with elected representatives, Council officers, local businesses and the voluntary and community sector to form a plan of action to improve gender equality in the borough.

Barking and Dagenham has one the highest reported rates of Domestic Violence (DV) in the country. This coupled with high rates of teenage pregnancies makes for a worrying picture. However, the Council and partners have made considerable progress in tackling these issues as well as gender inequality in general. Good progress has been made in relation to Domestic Violence and teenage pregnancies.

The Council is also a family friendly employer with policies that support women and flexible working arrangements, including for those with caring responsibilities. In Barking and Dagenham, women are moving towards equal representation as councillors. Of 51 councillors 21 are female and 30 are male. However women make up over 50% of the cabinet where of the nine members of the cabinet, five are female and four are male. Women also make up 50% of the senior management team for the Council.

Despite what has been achieved to date, there is still more that can be done. The development of a Gender Equality Charter is an important part of understanding what else can be done to address issues women in Barking and Dagenham face.

As shown below, research and evidence suggests women's inequality both in the UK and globally can be understood under four key themes:

- Violence against women
- Access to power and representation in public life
- Economic inequality and impact of caring responsibilities
- Culture including gender stereotyping

An essential consideration for the Charter, however, is that it reflects not only the national issues but, more importantly, the issues and challenges specifically faced locally by women and girls in Barking and Dagenham.

To this end, an extensive consultation exercise was undertaken to inform the development of the charter. The four key themes formed the basis of the consultation design and questions asked when starting the project.

# Women in Barking and Dagenham

## Gender breakdown



Women (52%) Men (48%)

Source: 2014 ONS Mid Year Estimates

## Domestic violence

Accounts for 41% of all violent crimes in the borough. The national average is 20%.



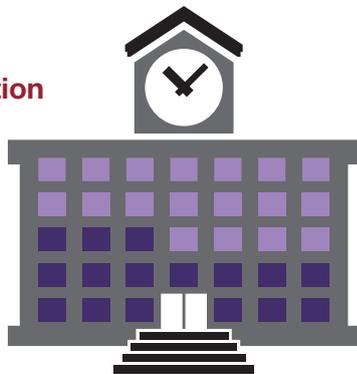
Source: Barking and Dagenham JSNA

#1

Barking and Dagenham has the highest rate of offending for domestic violence in London. (per 1000 population)

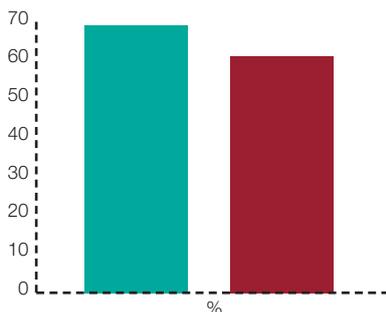
## Political representation

Nationally only 32% of Cllrs are women. In Barking and Dagenham 42% of Cllrs are women. Even better, 56% of the local Cabinet are women.



Women Cllrs (42%) Men Cllrs (58%)

## Employment rate for women



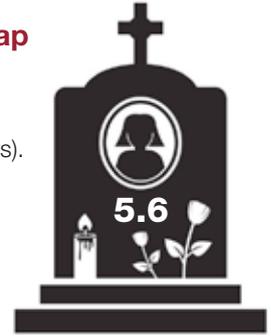
UK LBBDD

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

## Healthy life expectancy gap

On average women in Barking and Dagenham live longer than men (82.4 years compared to 77.7 years).

However women have a shorter healthy life expectancy than men. The gap is 5.6 years.

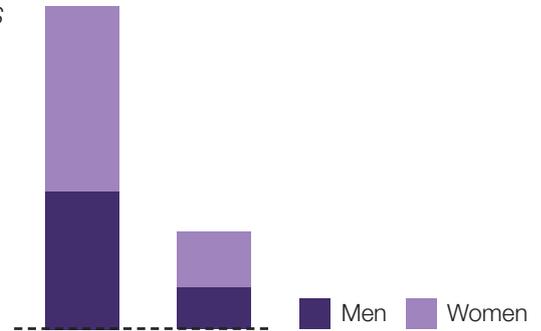


Source: Public Health England

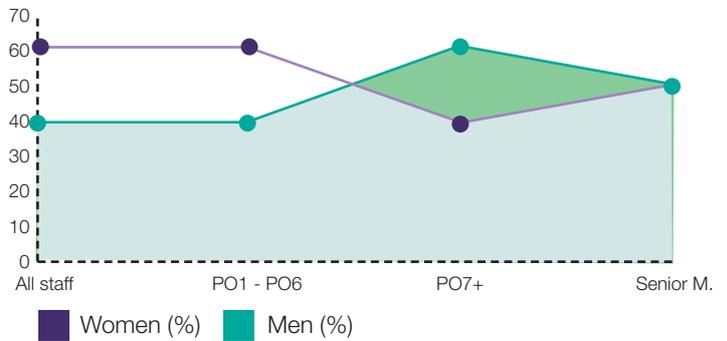
## Caring responsibilities

Women make up 57.5% of carers in the borough. 60% of carers who provide 50+ hours of care per week are women.

Source: ONS

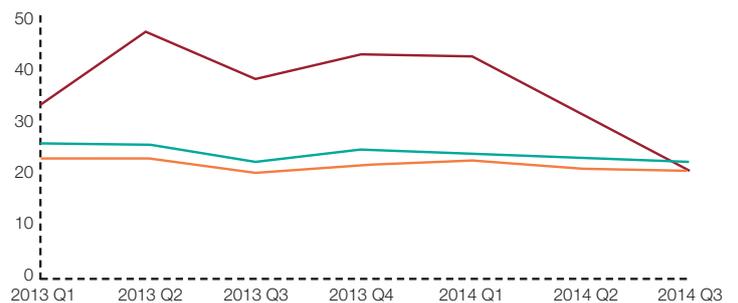


## Gender profile of Council staff



Source: Implementing the Equality & Diversity in Employment Policy 2014 (LBBDD)

## Teenage pregnancy rates



Barking and Dagenham England and Wales London

Source: 2015 ONS (per 1000 women aged 15-17)

# Charter

We believe that men and women are equal and no man or woman should face discrimination, abuse or hardship however they identify in terms of gender.

Our ambition is for Barking and Dagenham to be a place where people understand, respect and celebrate each other's differences - where tolerance, understanding and a sense of responsibility can grow and people of all genders can enjoy full equality and fulfil their potential.

In signing the charter we pledge to support everyone in Barking and Dagenham to:-

- receive equal pay across all sectors and have equal opportunities to succeed irrespective of their gender
- achieve equal representation in all walks of life including in communities, politics, business and industry
- work with schools and colleges to promote gender equality and raise awareness of gender equality issues
- to stand up against violence against women and girls and ensure everyone understands that such behaviour will not be tolerated
- support those with caring responsibilities and promote equal parenting, care giving and shared responsibilities in the home
- strive to promote gender equality and equal treatment of women and ensure our own communications support this

We commit to developing and implementing a plan that takes this agenda forward in a meaningful way and reflects the views of local women.

## 10 point Action Plan for 2016/17

This high level plan sets the direction for the Council and others signing up to the charter will adopt. It will be important in 2016/17 to turn these themes into detailed, practical delivery plans that will make a demonstrable difference to our communities.

1. Adopt the Gender Equality Charter and secure its adoption by key borough stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce, Schools, and the Voluntary and Community sector, publicly committing to achieving the pledges set out in the charter
2. Work with young people in schools to develop a better understanding of the issues raised during the production of the charter including gender equality and gender stereotyping
3. Improve the understanding of the positive benefits of family friendly policies for all businesses and celebrate and recognise businesses that demonstrate family friendly policies
4. In March each year recognise women's contribution by celebrating their achievements both past and present
5. Improve representation of women in senior management roles in all sectors and services
6. Develop an information hub for women building on current information and advice options
7. Continue the work to prevent violence against women and girls
8. Continue the work to reduce unplanned teenage pregnancies
9. Promote equal and supported access to community facilities for women and women's groups
10. Monitor the implementation of these actions in partnership with the key stakeholders identified and report on them each year