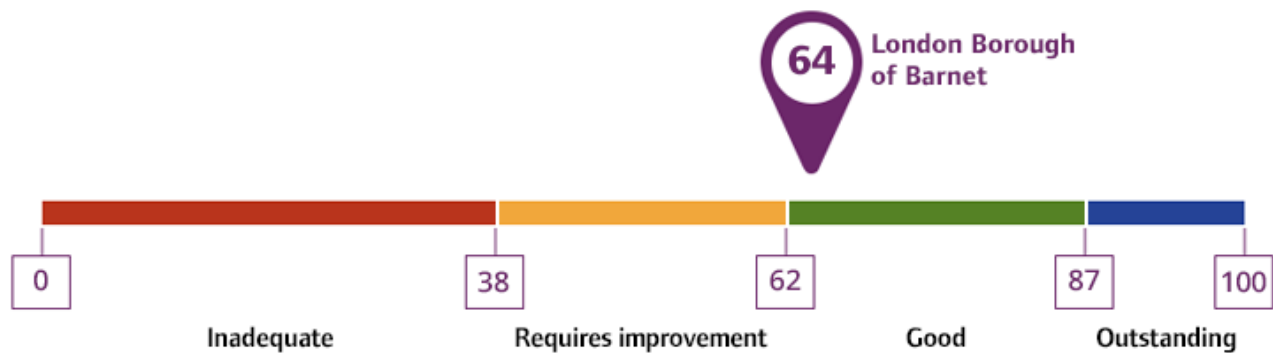


Overall summary

Local authority rating and score

London Borough of Barnet

Good



Quality statement scores

Assessing needs

Score: 2

Supporting people to lead healthier lives

Score: 2

Equity in experience and outcomes

Score: 2

Care provision, integration and continuity

Score: 3

Partnerships and communities

Score: 3

Safe pathways, systems and transitions

Score: 2

Safeguarding

Score: 3

Governance, management and sustainability

Score: 3

Learning, improvement and innovation

Score: 3

Summary of people's experiences

Overall, people had a good experience of receiving care and support in Barnet. We were told by some people that adult social care practitioners were helpful, supportive, and approachable, and that their support had been arranged promptly, and had led to positive outcomes for them.

People told us their assessments were person-centred and they were encouraged to retain as much independence as possible, without the need to use formal support. There was a holistic approach and people told us the staff included their family and unpaid carers voices in the assessment.

People told us they could access equipment and minor home adaptations to maintain their independence and continue living in their own homes. We also heard examples of people being kept safe, including very positive feedback about good outcomes achieved around housing and overcoming challenges people faced.

Some people used direct payments from the local authority to arrange their own care and support. However, some people were not aware of this as an option, and others said the process was difficult to manage, and that they did not want extra work as well as caring. More work is needed by the local authority to maximise the positive impact that direct payments can have on people's choice, control and independence.

The local authority had plans to improve the experience for unpaid carers. Some unpaid carers were not aware they could have specific carer's assessment, and this had not been discussed during the assessment of the person they cared for. Unpaid carers who were aware of their right to a separate carer's assessment told us they were not offered one. In contrast, a minority of unpaid carers told us they found the carer's assessments helpful when this had led to them receiving practical support. For example, some unpaid carers had received funding towards household items or had been given access to a Leisure Centre. One unpaid carer told us the swimming membership had saved their life, especially as self-care had been very difficult.

Summary of strengths, areas for development and next steps

The adult social care leadership team was well-established, experienced, and cohesive, with strong connections to the workforce. Leaders were visible, competent, and compassionate, and frontline staff told us they felt supported by both their managers and senior leaders. Staff also felt their voices were heard, which contributed to high staff retention rates. Additionally, there were many opportunities for training and development for adult social care practitioners and a culture of continuous learning.

The workplace culture was constructive, inclusive, and supportive, with the principles of equality, human rights, and diversity deeply ingrained in the values, culture, and leadership of the local authority.

Coproduction was embedded throughout the local authority's work. The local authority had a proactive community focused group called People's Voice, who met at community drop-ins with representatives of the local authority's Involvement Board, which provided an opportunity to listen to feedback from people to improve services. The People's Voice Community was seen as an asset to the local authority as they proactively targeted and supported minoritised and marginalised groups.

The local authority had acknowledged a gap in people accessing information and advice and there was a commitment to improving services through engaging closely with the coproduction group and partners, particularly around improving accessibility and digital inclusion. Improvements have already been made to the information available on the local authority's website and through the production of 'easy read' guides. Information and advice is provided by the council's Social Care Direct team, via the Council's website and through council commissioned information and advice providers.

The local authority demonstrated a strong prevention agenda through their Prevention and Wellbeing team and reablement support. Reablement was the default pathway for people being discharged from hospital and for new community referrals including referrals for people with mental health needs. Reablement services had a clear focus on supporting people to retain and regain their independence, preventing or reducing the need for formal support and avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions.

Social care assessments, care planning and reviews were carried out by staff using a strength-based approach and considering people's wishes and goals. However, some people had to wait for long periods for an assessment and longer for care reviews. Waiting times for assessment and reviews, and the risks being presented to people were recognised as a challenge by the local authority, particularly as there had been a large increase in demand post-Covid. Additional resources had been allocated to reduce waiting lists and at the time of the assessment, some progress had been made, although the work was at an early stage and more time was required to fully realise and sustain the impact.

The local authority had been working to improve waiting times for OT assessments with additional recruitment, which included a specialist learning disability OT. This investment in staffing had resulted in a drop in average OT assessment waiting times by almost 50% between January and June 2024.

According to national data there was a higher than average uptake of direct payments. However, some of the people we spoke with told us they were not aware of direct payments as an option. There was a commitment to continue increasing the uptake and actions were in place to remove barriers, including the recent commissioning of a new direct payment support service, with specific emphasis on providing a payroll service and increasing availability of personal assistants.

The local authority had a clear and robust approach to safeguarding with a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and other reporting networks and metrics to reflect on cases and learning. There was clear senior leadership oversight. The local authority worked closely with the local Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) and partners to deliver a coordinated approach to safeguarding adults in the area.

There was recognition and leader' buy-in on the need to develop how performance data was analysed and used to understand and improve delivery and outcomes for people. This would build on the approach in place at the time of the assessment which focused on performance monitoring and analysis of outputs, together with understanding outcomes and impacts and using this to inform strategy and resource allocation.

The local authority acknowledged the gaps in support for unpaid carers, particularly in the respite care offer and they were making efforts to improve this. The local authority had coproduced a Carers and Young Carers Strategy in 2023 and provided training for its staff about the needs of unpaid carers, and this was coproduced with unpaid carers themselves.

Feedback about the availability and responsiveness of advocacy provision was mixed; some people found the provision to be responsive and effective, whilst others had to wait to access the service. Further work is needed by the local authority to understand this.

There were some identified gaps in care provision, for example in accommodation-based services for people who required specialist support, particularly people living with dementia, mental health, and autism. Plans were in place to increase capacity in these areas. Through partnership working with housing, there were also plans to build and improve the quality of specialist housing for people with a disability.

More work was needed around some teams having direct access to detailed health records. Senior leaders acknowledged this gap and were working on plans to improve access, so staff only needed to use one device to access both health and social care records.

There was a positive approach to promoting integration and partnership work to improve people's health and wellbeing and outcomes, and this had been recognised in awards: a partnership approach which delivered improved outcomes for people with 5 other local authorities was recognised as good practice nationally, and subsequently won the Local Government Chronicle Adult Social Care Award in 2021. Furthermore, in 2024 Barnet was awarded 'Borough of Sanctuary Award' for welcoming people seeking sanctuary and providing them with a place to stay.