



Accessible design: a brand and campaign for Barnet Council Arts and Culture programme

Case Study



Executive Summary

“ create a brand and campaign for Barnet Council Arts and Culture programme ”

Barnet Council's ambition and vision:

- Our ambition - to work together to strengthen Barnet's identity as a cultural destination.
- Our vision - to be one of London's most creative boroughs.

The brief:

Make the vision a reality, through creating a strong, vibrant and recognisable brand identity.

Apply the brand creatively across a suite of new communications materials and channels, spanning digital, social media, and print.

Background

Arts and culture can sometimes be seen as inaccessible. Barnet Council wanted to challenge this idea and make arts and culture engaging and accessible for everyone. **Barnet is a place for all.**

Arts and culture encompasses a wide range of activity in the borough:

- cultural and social activities
- parks and leisure activities
- arts and film
- creative industries and communities
- history and heritage

Our brief was to bring this offering together under one umbrella brand which encompasses all five strands, representing Barnet as a place with a diverse, accessible, and enriching cultural offer for residents and visitors to enjoy for many years to come.



Objectives

- To represent the council's stance on arts and culture, with a focus on inclusivity
- Be engaging, vibrant, creative, contemporary and innovative
- Be a brand that is recognised and becomes an umbrella for cultural activity across the Borough
- Reflect the scope and breadth of the council's culture strategy and the deliverables within it
- Be versatile across multiple channels including web, social and print media
- Be relevant to multiple generations – from children and young people to 65+

Target Audience

The brand and campaign has a very wide audience, covering the spectrum of Barnet residents, and potential visitors outside the borough. With 1 in 4 people in the UK living with some form of disability, considering accessibility throughout the design process is essential for inclusivity.

Accessibility is not just designing for one impairment or condition. It's designing inclusively to meet a range of needs. This includes those with: impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities, deafness or impaired hearing.

Accessible design is good design. What this means is that when you design something for people with additional needs, it almost always improves the experience for everyone at the same time.

Strategy and execution

When looking at the word Barnet we noticed it has the word 'art' in it. So there is literally art in Barnet! This made us smile so we went with it as our start point, and the creative for the campaign was built around this.

Every element of the visual language was considered with accessibility in mind, from colour contrast and font choices to layout and structure. Clear hierarchies and logical flow ensured that information was easy to read and absorb.

The identity was flexible across digital and traditional media and was deployed on everything from bus panels and web pages to internal communications and paid video adverts.

Challenges

- Use bold, bright colours for the logo and visual identity, while making sure there is enough colour contrast to be accessible.
- Use different fonts within the logo, finding a compromise between being interesting but still easily readable.
- Create an exciting and engaging strategy, while being fully accessible.
- Add visual interest through typography and graphics without impacting legibility.

THERE'S **art** IN
BaINET



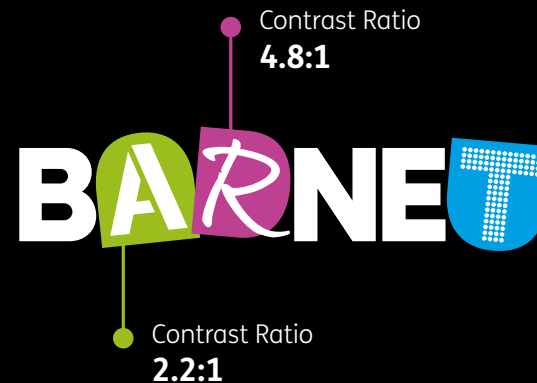
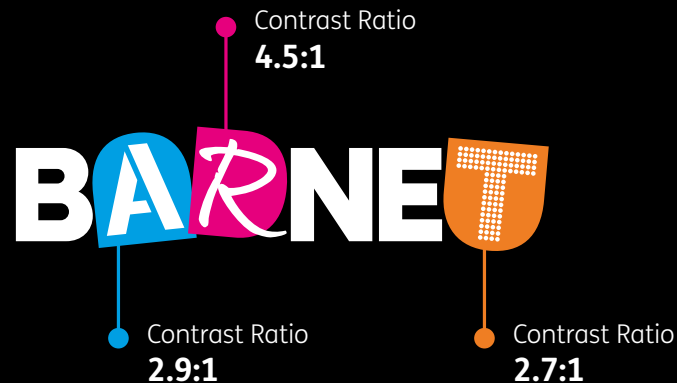
Some early initial concepts - the mix of unusual fonts, and all uppercase text, could be hard to read

THERE'S ART IN
BaINET

There's **art** in
BARNET



Refined version with “A, R and T” confined within coloured shapes for better readability.



When testing the designs, we found the letters “A, R and T” in white weren’t all accessible against the bright colours. Simply making the colours darker would reduce the impact of the design, and risk not having enough contrast with the black background, so the solution was to use black for these three letters, which was still visually pleasing.

Note: For Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 Level AA, the required contrast ratio is **4.5:1 for normal text** (14pt and above) and **3:1 for large text** (18pt and above, or bold 14pt and above).

The final core logo, with black letters on the coloured shapes. We simplified the “T” at this final stage, to improve legibility particularly at smaller sizes. The logo was also tested for legibility in monochrome.



There's art in



Architecture
Industry
Stencils

Personal
Creative writing
Storytelling

Theatre
Lights
Performance

There's art in



There's art in



There's **culture** in Barnet
There's **connections** in Barnet
There's **collaborations** in Barnet
There's **community** in Barnet
There's **togetherness** in Barnet
There's **friendship** in Barnet
There's **inspiration** in Barnet
There's **potential** in Barnet
There's **learning** in Barnet
There's **heritage** in Barnet
There's **opportunity** in Barnet
There's **spirit** in Barnet
There's **flavour** in Barnet
There's **inclusion** in Barnet
There's **talent** in Barnet
There's **acceptance** in Barnet
There's **creativity** in Barnet
There's **history** in Barnet
There's **fun** in Barnet
There's **passion** in Barnet
There's **action** in Barnet
There's **pride** in Barnet

Font

In order to create a distinctive look for the visual identity, we chose Neulis Neue as a headline font.

There is a trade off between adding some personality to a project through a font, versus making sure it is accessible and readable. Considerations include:

- Only using a more decorative font sparingly, such as for headlines
- Look for letterforms in the font that help with readability, such as a clear difference between a capital "I" and lowercase "l", curved tails on letters such as "t"s and lowercase single storey "a"

The rest of the copy uses FS Me, a typeface family developed with Mencap, a leading UK charity for people with learning disabilities. It was designed to meet, and then exceed, the recommendations of government accessibility guidelines.

Document design

1.1

H2 Create more opportunities for residents to get involved in cultural activities in Barnet

Encouraging cultural participation is a core objective of this strategy, encompassing activities in areas such as dance, art, music, sport, and food, among many others.

Our local community told us they want more opportunities to be involved in cultural activities, with **83% of respondents agreeing**. Many residents also told us they leave the borough to go to the theatre, see an exhibition or a concert.

We will:

- Work with cultural partners to explore options for making cultural activities accessible to all;
- Promote progressive approaches and innovative arts and cultural practices that go beyond traditional methods;
- Explore the potential for digital engagement through greater use of technology;
- Encourage networks to share information about existing activities more widely.

H3 Instant impact

June 2024
Hosting London Festival of Architecture 2024

Our London Festival of Architecture programme involved over 55 events and a built project reimagining Copthall Pavilion.

Throughout the year
Community Events Programme 2024

Funding has been secured to continue our small grants to community groups to hold events and cultural celebrations.

October 2024
Establish a Culture Fund

Enable local artists and cultural organisations to develop their practice and offer more cultural activity in the borough.



Case Study

A creative hub: artsdepot

The artsdepot is a creative home for all. Located in North Finchley their accessible building houses activities and shows for everyone. Reaching over 162,000 people a year, they are a destination for our communities in Barnet and beyond. From lunch clubs for older adults, to shows for babies, their offer reaches everyone from infants to centenarians. They are a dementia friendly venue and participate in the Sunflower scheme. Their access fund ensures that those who can't afford to see a show or join a workshop can still take part. artsdepot also offer an annual programme of work experience for learning disabled young people aged 16 – 24. The programme focuses on skills development and introducing participants to working in the arts and culture sector where participants work towards an Arts Award qualification.

They have held events like the Big Beat Playground, the rave for kids that grew from a small free festival at artsdepot in 2019 for 200 people to an outdoor event for 500 people in 2023 – giving away over half its tickets to low-income families. They also have a broad programme of performances which brings some of the biggest names in dance, circus and comedy to Barnet. The artist residency programme supports 8 artists/ companies a year with a wide-ranging package from a small bursary, space and tailored mentoring. It continues to be unique in its approach.

A minimum font size of 12pt

Paragraphs of text are well spaced out with areas of white space to prevent text ‘swimming together’, which is a particular issue for people with dyslexia.

Decorative elements are marked as such, so they are ignored by assistive technologies

The image has alt text “A family draw and paint on the windows of artsdepot during the London Festival of Architecture, 2024”

Text colour has enough contrast with background

Text is left aligned

Different font sizes and weights differentiate between headlines, subheadings and body copy, to ensure clear hierarchy.

Document design

Strategic Priorities

1. Involvement



Objectives

- 1.1 Create more opportunities for residents to get involved in cultural activities in Barnet
- 1.2 Strengthen pathways to employment in the creative industries
- 1.3 Streamline Council support for organisations planning to hold events
- 1.4 Support our cultural institutions and enable arts and cultural organisations to access funding opportunities
- 1.5 Strengthen networking and cultural partnerships

1.4 Support our cultural institutions and enable arts and cultural organisations to access funding opportunities

Our cultural organisations have faced unprecedented challenges in recent years. The far-reaching impacts of Covid-19, the increasing cost of living, and reduced support and funding have all played a part. The need for support is evident in our Audience Agency research, where nearly 50% of surveyed organisations reported a need for assistance with fundraising, advocacy, and organisational development.

50% of surveyed organisations reported a need for assistance with fundraising, advocacy, and organisational development.



1.5 Strengthen networking and cultural partnerships

Currently, we have partnerships and networks that support cultural outcomes in the borough. These include:

- Barnet Arts and Culture Network
- Barnet & Culture for Youth, our cultural education partnership
- Barnet Together Alliance, our infrastructure partnership for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector
- Barnet Green Spaces Network
- Barnet Borough Arts Council
- The Barnet Society
- Barnet Multi-Faith Forum

We can grow the number of organisations and individuals connecting in the borough. Our Audience Agency research revealed that only 55% of cultural organisations have a strategic partnership with another organisation, and we want this number to increase. The research also identified several challenges, such as organisations being unaware of available networks, their aims and purposes, and how to join them.

Instant impact

January 2021 - Ongoing
Reopened the Culture Strategy Steering Group to guide the delivery of the strategy

Following Cabinet approval of the Culture Strategy, a Culture Action Group will be established to guide the strategy's implementation.

5.2 Increase the number of young people taking part in cultural activities in Barnet

One clear finding from our research was the significant number of young people leaving Barnet to access culture. Our aim is to collaborate with cultural partners to create conditions that encourage young people to choose Barnet for their cultural experiences. This is vital for establishing a sustainable cultural sector, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship where young people contribute to and benefit from the cultural vibrancy of their own borough.

Instant Impact

October 2024
Establish a dedicated Creative Communities programme that stimulates cultural education and engagement with young people as well as intergenerational activity

Actively encouraging participation in Barnet's cultural sector, identifying young people, young people and migrant communities.



Case Study

Inspiring the next generation: Barnet's Cultural Education Partnership: Barnet & Culture for Youth

Barnet & Culture for Youth is Barnet's Cultural Education Partnership. Administered by Barnet, the partnership is led by a steering group formed of representative from arts organisations, local authority services and primary, secondary and higher education providers from across the borough.

The membership comprises nearly 150 education providers, arts and cultural organisations and artists working with young people in Barnet. The principal aim of the partnership is to identify young people in which every child and young person in Barnet can experience a rich cultural education that provides them with tools to enable them to navigate the world and feel it is theirs to enjoy and impact as well.

Barnet & Culture for Youth have recently received £500,000 to support the cultural education of young people in Barnet.

The funding will be used to support:

- Creative learning events for home-schooled children
- Training places for Sixth Schools
- Artist Residences in SEN Schools
- A rolling creative learning programme for young people at the Pearson Study Centre enabling them to access enriched learning opportunities, including internships, and building self-belief
- Migrants to support schools to bring in artists, fostering collaborations between students and professionals to create creativity within educational settings
- Networking, training and professional development for artists and educators



5.3 Increase the number of young people leading cultural and creative sessions

We believe in empowering young people to plan and lead cultural and creative sessions for their peers. This not only develops leadership skills but also builds confidence, providing valuable skills for their professional lives. Additionally, this peer-led approach enhances reliability, as young leaders can better understand and connect with the interests and preferences of their peers.

Instant impact

Spring 2025
Understand the barriers which prevent young people from accessing cultural activities in the borough

Work with key partners who are addressing this through their programmes, such as Barnet & Culture for Youth, Artspark and Art Agents Involvement.



5.4 Evaluate how we reach young people with communications

Currently, only 54% of young people surveyed believe they have enough information about local activities, while 57% felt they lacked sufficient knowledge about the borough's history. Our ambition is to change these numbers, ensuring that young people are aware of the cultural opportunities available in the borough. Collaborating with partners, we seek to support peer-led programming that reaches more young audiences and cultures that interest and encourages participation.



Appendix 1. How we developed the strategy

Timeline for developing the strategy

- October - November 2022:** Original concept and draft plan of how we will produce the strategy with the local community
- March 2023 - March 2024:** Steering group meetings start to take place
- May - June 2023:** Development of consultation and engagement programme
- January - March 2024:** Write up of strategy
- April 2024:** Strategy submitted for approval to Cabinet
- November - December 2022:** Initial background desktop research started
- February 2023:** Assessment of applications to be part of Culture Strategy Steering Group
- August - November 2023:** Start of consultation and engagement programme
- December 2023:** Analysis of findings from all forms of engagement
- December 2022 - January 2023:** Call for individuals to apply to become a member of the Culture Strategy Steering Group
- January - March 2023:** The Audience Agency research conducted
- November 2023:** London Borough of Culture bid submitted
- November 2023:** Sourcing of core members to develop the strategy

Our commitment to co-production

An important part of crafting this strategy was making sure we centred residents in every stage of its development. We wanted to work in partnership with residents on the key choices that influenced this strategy. Our Community Participation Strategy (CPS), released in 2022, gave us the roadmap to make this happen. The key principles of the CPS are:

1. We go where people are.
2. We listen through doing.
3. We listen.
4. We are transparent, accessible and open.
5. We value community power.

In the selection of steering group members, we implemented a fair and transparent process. The evolution of applications was carried out by two Council employees and an independent representative not affiliated with the Council.

15 individuals were selected to be a member of the Culture Strategy Steering Group. Some of the organisational backgrounds represented in the independent steering group include:

- Artspark
- Barnet Society and Medical Festival
- Midbass University
- New Citizens Gateway
- The Phoenix Cinema
- Inkluder CIC
- Royal Airforce Museum
- Barnet Green Spaces Network
- NWHLH Charity
- East Finchley Open Artists Group
- Barnet and Southgate College
- Nothing But Gardens
- Barnet Borough Arts Council
- Fresh Arts
- Art Agents Involvement

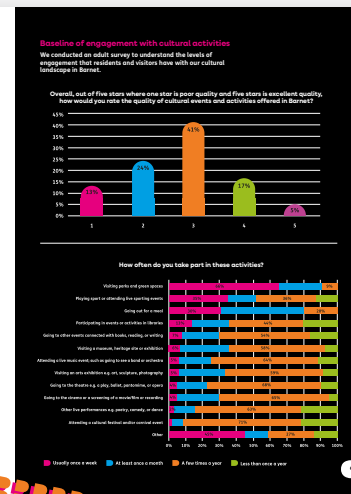


The asset mapping reveals an absence of creative and art spaces in Barnet, evident in the identification of only one space designated as a creative studio in the borough. Additionally, the research highlights an uneven distribution of cultural assets throughout the borough, with more cultural organisations and facilities concentrated in North Finchley, Chipping Barnet, and New Barnet, and fewer in Edgware, Colindale and West Hendon. Improving the equitable distribution of cultural assets within the borough is essential to ensure all residents have access to them. We have also seen that we have more of certain types of cultural assets, and less of others, specifically assets focused on creative outputs.

Some of our Cultural Venues and spaces:

- 2 Arts Council England EMPs
- 16 Conservation areas
- 18 Schools on an Artspark journey
- 3 TV production studios
- 3 Indoor theatre venues
- 1 Bandstand
- 2 Museums
- 14 Libraries
- 3 Cinemas
- 11 Arts Award centres
- 1 Art gallery
- 1 Outdoor theatre

When we look at the breakdown of our cultural spaces in the borough, what is evident is that we lack creative infrastructure within the borough, for example art galleries and museum theatres. Despite being the second most populous borough in London, we have fewer creative facilities compared to others.



Example campaign artworks



Results / Outcomes



There's Art in Barnet is a bold campaign celebrating the borough's rich arts and culture. Launched in April 2025, the initiative promotes Barnet as a cultural destination by showcasing local artists, venues, and events.

With a strong focus on accessibility and inclusive design, the campaign has driven over one million video views and record-breaking engagement.

It is successfully reshaping perceptions, making arts and culture more visible, welcoming, and accessible to all.

Fresh thinking and strong execution, which made a real difference in the success of this campaign – reflected in the high awareness levels achieved for a new brand. ”

Sunita Trehan
Senior Campaigns Manager,
London Borough of Barnet

Learnings & Recommendations

- **Consider accessibility from the very start of a project** - this results in a smoother process and avoids having to make substantial changes later in the process.
- **Accessibility requirements won't limit your creativity** - while there may be some challenges, these can be overcome with creative thinking and problem solving. For example, there's no reason bright / light colours can't be used, they just need to be paired with a dark background.
- **Keep it simple** - this helps avoid overcomplicated ideas and designs, making the experience and messaging clear and easy to understand for everyone.
- **Research and follow best practice** - there are lots of online resources available with guidance for accessibility on topics such as typography, colour, document structure, alt text and charts/diagrams.



touch
design

BARNET
LONDON BOROUGH